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Vol. 3 No. 2
February 1996

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PC GAMER
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Multimedia: The Next Generation

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If you're the kind of gamer who feels the need for speed, you'll want to dive into this look at PC racing — past, present, and future.

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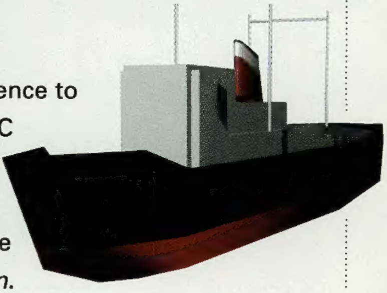
Syndicate was one of the most entertaining and underrated action-strategy games ever — and the sequel promises to be even better.

44 Destiny

It takes real confidence to challenge one of PC gaming's all-time classics, but *Destiny* may just be the new *Civilization.*



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The secret of the ages: follow our instructions to subscribe, and *PC Gamer* will enrich your life every month. And if you need Customer Service, we've got the answers.

Multimedia Gaming

Say the words "interactive movie" to an experienced gamer and watch what happens. If he's too polite to grimace outwardly, his eyes will probably glaze over with disinterest.

That's because he knows what the gaming industry is only just learning: movies *aren't* interactive. They're not supposed to be. And if you can't interact with a game, it's not a game at all. Last year was full of examples that bore this out, programs that tried to be both cinematic and interactive — and failed miserably at both.

You don't watch *Lawrence of Arabia* because you want to command a bedouin army in an attack on Aqaba; you watch it because you want to sit back and be told a great story about a fascinating man. And you don't play a computer game so you can sit back and watch a movie. They're two different animals, and any attempt to cram one into the other's mold cheapens both of them.

So where does that leave all this nifty new technology? Full-motion video is fun to look at, and games like *Wing Commander IV* and *Command & Conquer* prove it can be an effective part of an entertaining game — as long as it isn't used as a substitute for good game design. More and more designers are coming to this conclusion — and that's an exciting prospect. Check out our cover feature on page 74 to see how the face of multimedia gaming is changing.

Dan

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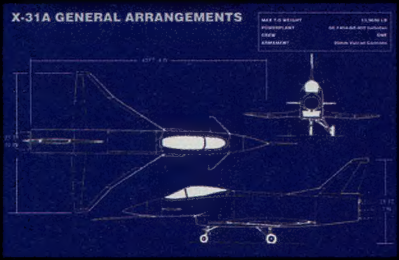
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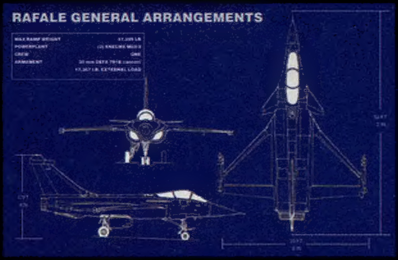
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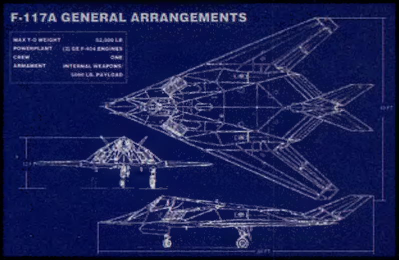
F-117A GENERAL ARRANGEMENTS
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POWERPLANT (2) GE F-404 ENGINES
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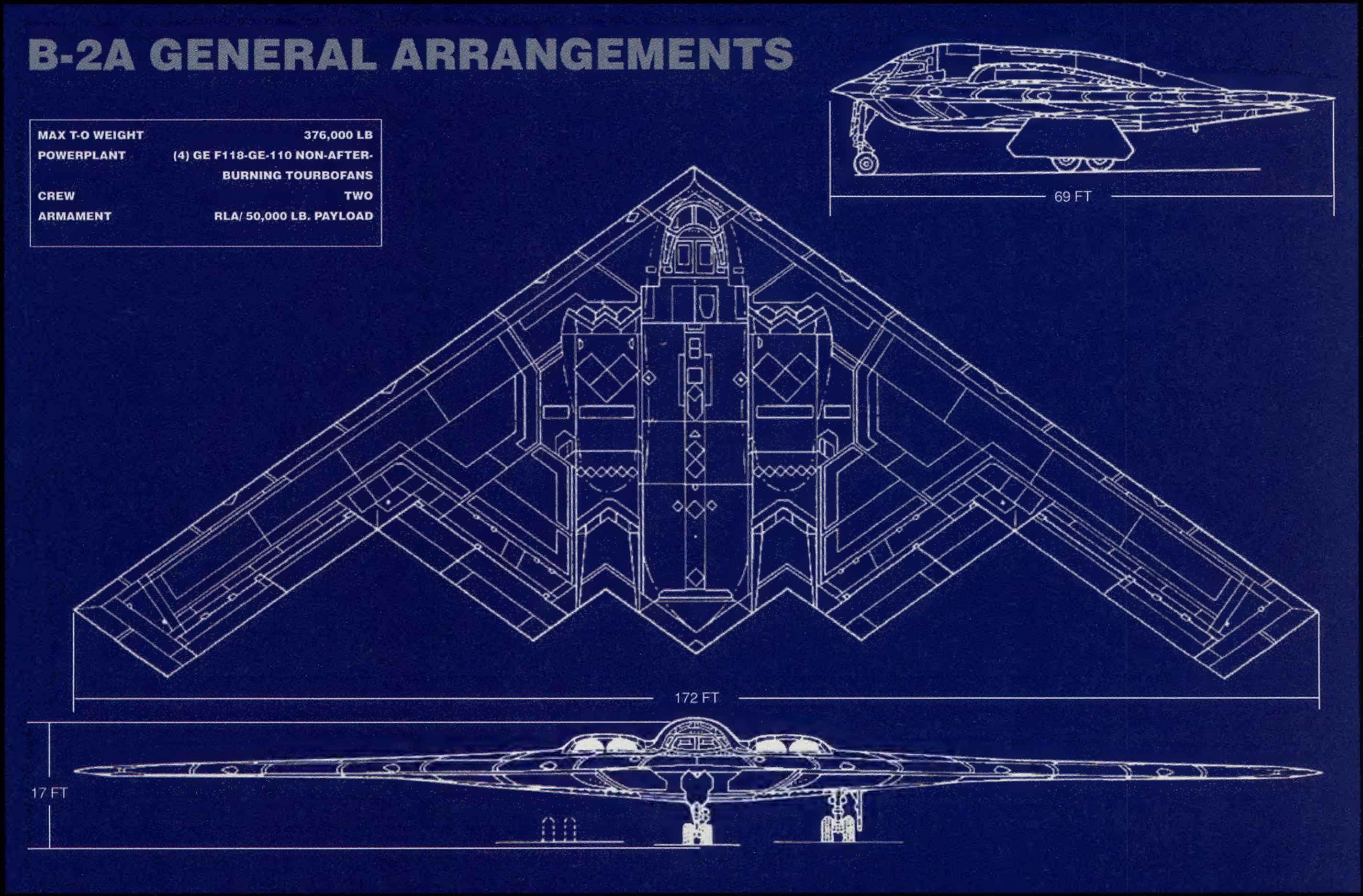
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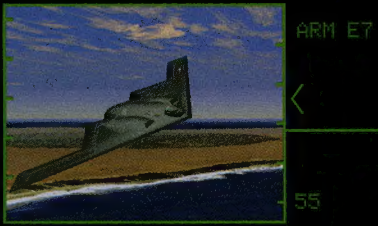
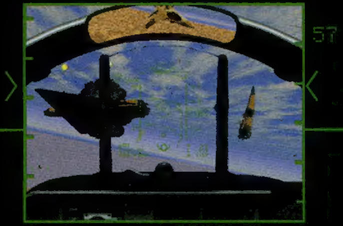
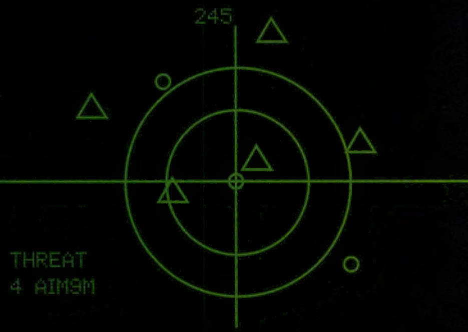


IF NOT BEING DETECTED IS YOUR THING, CLIMB ABOARD THE B-2 STEALTH BOMBER. IT TOOK AN ARMY OF ENGINEERS TO MAKE YOU INVISIBLE TO ENEMY RADAR. AND WE GOT ALL THE SPECS.



ADVANCED 3D GRAPHICS AND DIGITIZED SPECIAL EFFECTS ADD TO THE REALISM. ALSO MULTIPLE STATES OF DAMAGE (WATCH YOUR TARGET EXPLODE INTO BITS) AND DIGITIZED EXPLOSIONS.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THREAT
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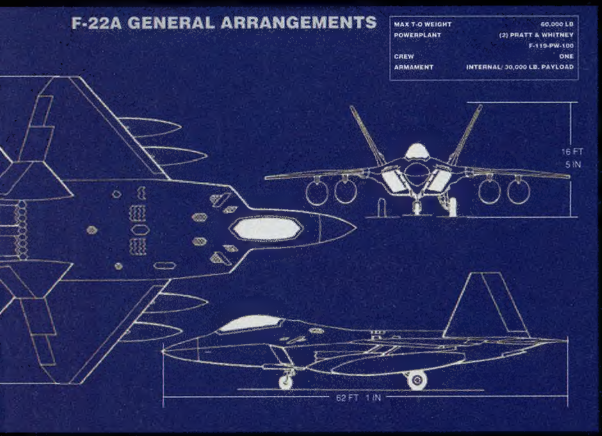
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62 FT 1 IN

Jane's ALL THE WORLD'S AIRCRAFT
File Reference
60
23

Be the first civilian to experience air combat in the advanced tactical fighters of the early 21st Century in this sequel to US Navy Fighters (the standard for simulations in 1995). Fly aircraft that are just starting Pentagon test programs.

89%

3.2 G 3 245 N 63 12 21 E

THR 100%

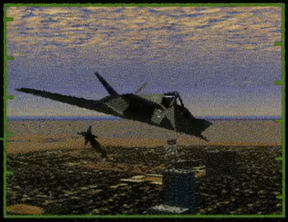
This simulation is based on exclusive, authentic and up-to-date information from Jane's Information Group (the world's largest publisher of military information). It includes a fully interactive JANE'S All The World's Aircraft Guide with blue prints, weapons information, engine diagrams, and cockpit layouts. You can even pull up video footage of the actual fighters in test programs pulling the same maneuvers you pull in the game.

This is your opportunity to experience U.S. tactical and technology trends. Like the X-31's post stall maneuvers and high angles of attack. In scaleable resolution modes for maximum performance on multiple processor speeds (320 x 200 all the way to 1024 x 768).

ROUTE

645

Modem and network play lets up to 8 players dogfight in authentically detailed F-22's. Supercruise through fully texture mapped terrain ranging from deserts to islands to cities.



3 all-new Air Power Campaigns of the Future with different and unique threat environments. The kind that require the extreme bombing accuracy of the F-117A to take out hard targets. Just beware the air defenses of the new enemy forces.

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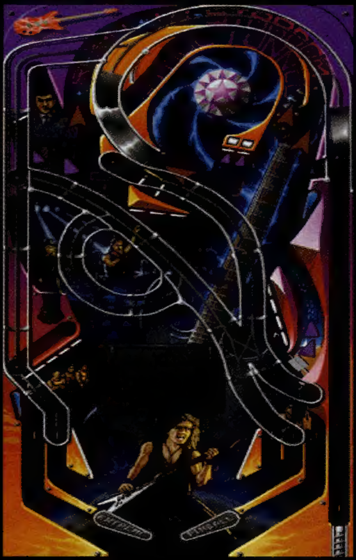
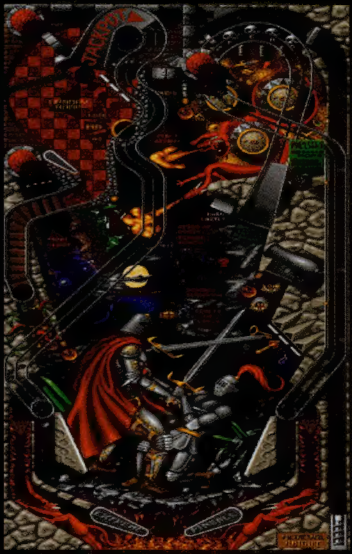
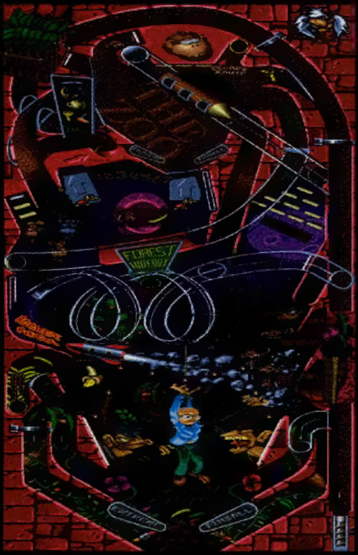
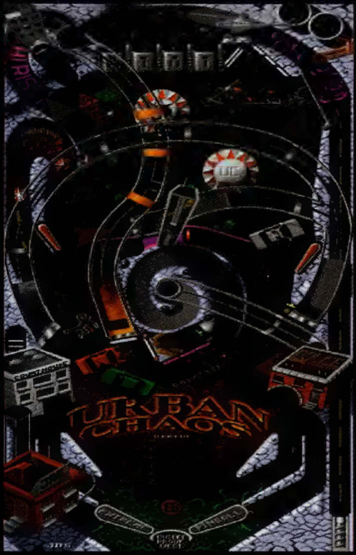




Epic MegaGames takes pinball to a new level of realism with Extreme Pinball, the follow-up to our award-winning Epic Pinball (PC Format rated 91%). What a follow-up it is! We've doubled the resolution, increased the sound & music capacity, improved the playfield dimensions, animated the dotmation to arcade quality and most importantly we've created the most detailed, realistic and compelling table layouts in PC pinball. All this and super-smooth scrolling too!





- Four tables with unique 2D and 3D, SGI-rendered dotmation animated sequences.
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Call 1-800-972-7434 to order for only $35.00 plus $4 s&h. **Extreme Pinball is also available at your local software retailer from ELECTRONIC ARTS.**

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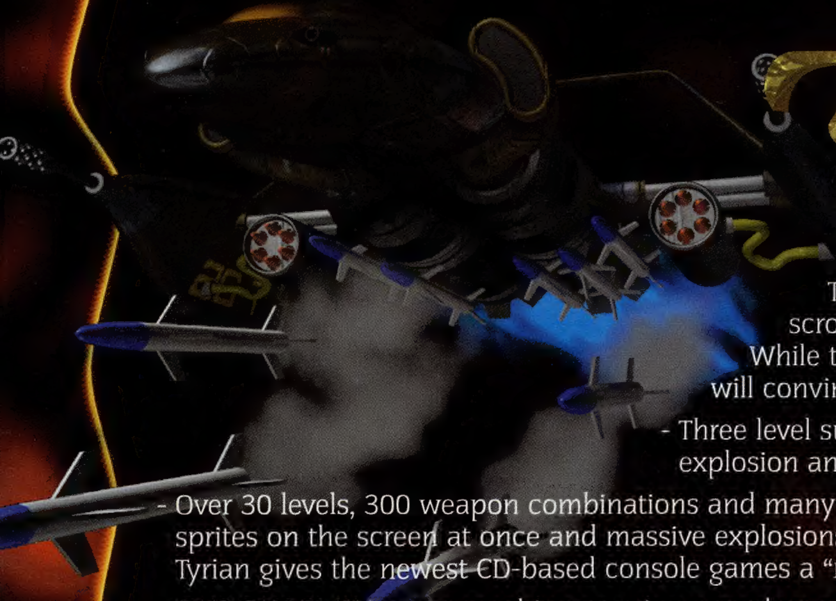


Tyrian

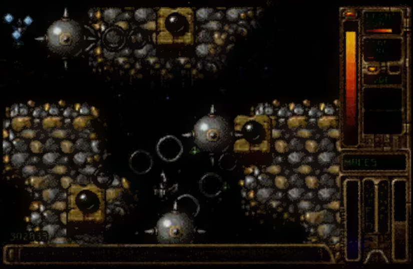
THE ULTIMATE PC SHOOTER

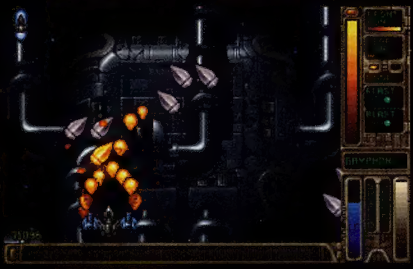
Tyrian is sure to be considered the hottest scrolling action-shooter ever released for the PC. While this is certainly a bold claim we think one play will convince you. Check this out:

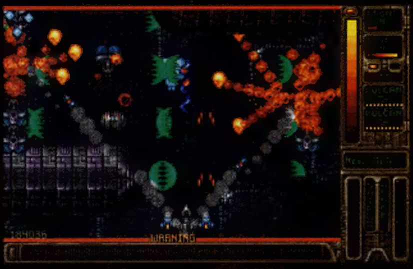
- Three level super-smooth parallax scrolling plus additional explosion and transparency effects for Pentium users.
- Over 30 levels, 300 weapon combinations and many secret levels and features. With up to 300 sprites on the screen at once and massive explosions all around, it's no wonder PC Gamer said Tyrian gives the newest CD-based console games a "run for their money" (rated 87%)
- TWO CAN PLAY on one machine or using a modem or network connection. Go for the highest individual scores or work cooperatively forming a giant dual-ship configuration.

Tyrian features 3 episodes of awesome action for only **$35.00**. **Call 1-800-972-7434 to order.**

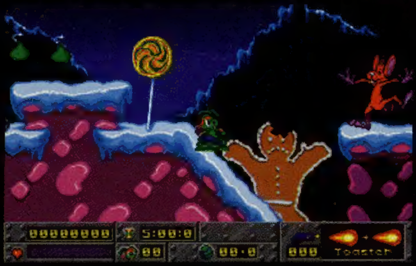
SEE MORE SCREEN SHOTS AND DOWNLOAD THE SHAREWARE VERSION OF THIS AWESOME ACTION GAME FROM OUR WEB SITE HTTP://WWW.EPICGAMES.COM



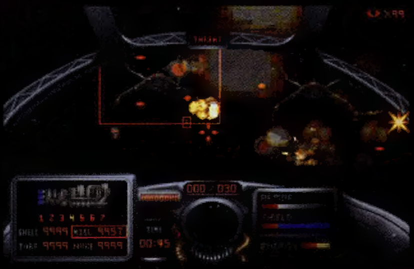


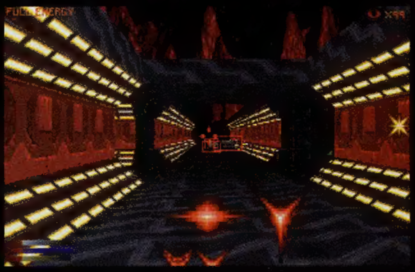


The all-new **JAZZ JACKRABBIT CHRISTMAS 1995 EDITION** is available now. If you're looking for fast action the whole family can enjoy **DOWNLOAD IT RIGHT NOW** and then call 1-800-972-7434 to order the huge 90 level Jazz Jackrabbit CD-ROM for the special **holiday sale price** of only **$39.00** - you save $10! Call soon, sale ends January 31.



RADIX: BEYOND THE VOID is an intense 3D action game developed for the PC platform. You'll fly down alien infested tunnels of the Theta-2 base as well as inside the massive alien mothership. You will also fly into the Void, where unknown terrors await you. It'll take great persistence and skill to navigate the small assault fighter through the winding tunnels and corridors to successfully accomplish your mission. (Un)fortunately, heavy alien resistance will attempt to hinder your objective. For more details visit our web site, www.epicgames.com Three huge episodes - **$35.00**





Product Information Number 115

Welcome to the World of PC GAMER

We kept it under wraps for as long as we could stand. Now, we proudly introduce the new, improved *PC Gamer* CD-ROM.

You'll find *The CD* is still packed with all the hot game demos, patches, and add-on levels you've come to expect from us. But, wait — there's more!

For the first time ever, you'll actually enter the world of *PC Gamer*. You'll meet Cheryl, our receptionist, and wander unescorted through our cluttered, but very tastefully decorated, offices. Now's your chance to snoop around our desks and rifle through our files — and while you're at it, you might even help us solve the mystery surrounding Rickets, the official *PC Gamer* monkey. (You'll find clues on *The CD* every month; uncover the truth, and you could win a prize so incredibly fabulous that even *we* don't know what it is yet!)

Entering the World of PC Gamer

You begin in the secluded alley that leads to the hidden *PC Gamer* elevator. Move your mouse pointer around the screen, and you'll notice it turns into an arrow. Click, and you'll move in the direction of the arrow.

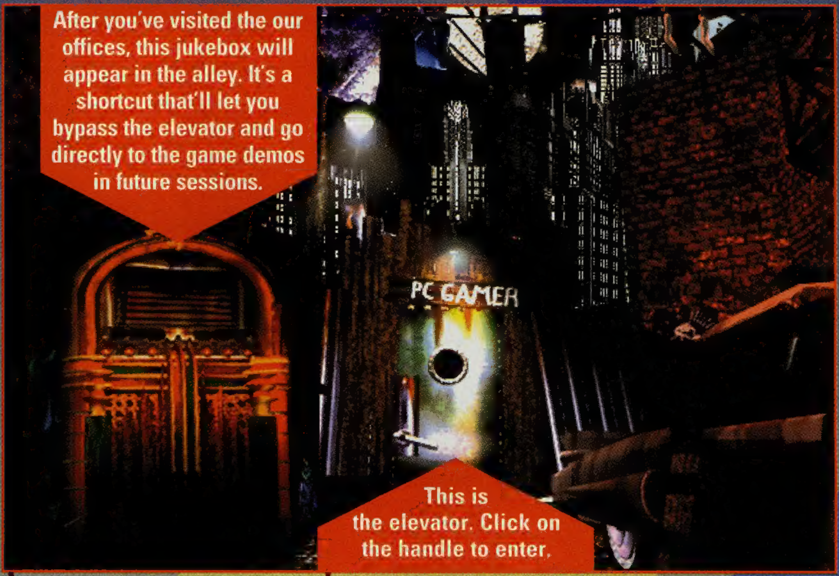
To visit the *PC Gamer* offices, click on the door handle to open the elevator, then click forward to step inside. Turn around until you're facing the front of the elevator and click on the elevator button. (If you need more help in getting the elevator to work, check out the hints on page 9.)

Once you're in our offices, you can move around using the mouse. To check out the game demos, click on the jukebox. When you're ready to leave, move your mouse to the top of the screen, and a menu will appear with an exit option.

Quick Start for The CD

Our new front end is Windows-based, so setup couldn't be easier:

1. Insert the CD and load Windows.
2. From the RUN option (found under the File menu in Windows 3.1 or under Windows 95's Start menu) type X:SETUP (where X is the letter of your CD-ROM drive).
3. This will create the *PC Gamer* icon group. Click on the icon, and *The CD* will launch.



After you've visited the our offices, this jukebox will appear in the alley. It's a shortcut that'll let you bypass the elevator and go directly to the game demos in future sessions.

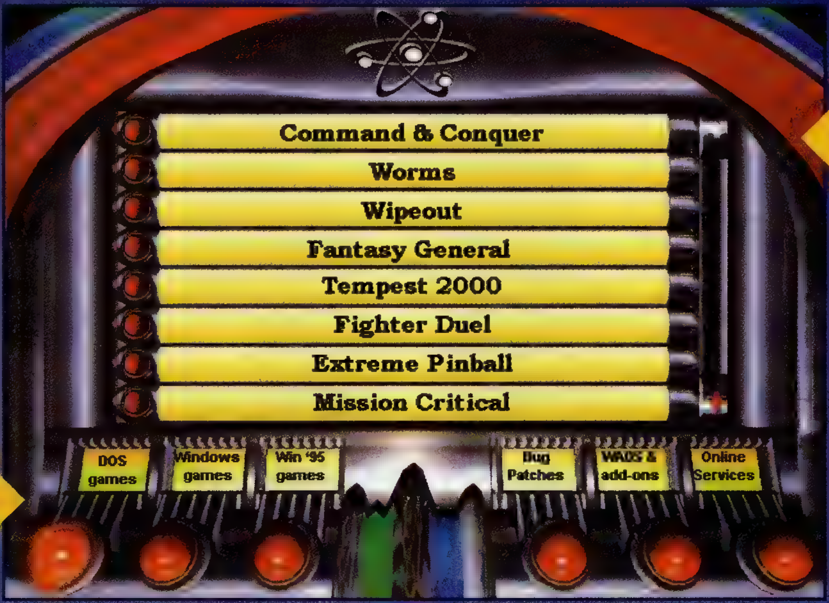
This is the elevator. Click on the handle to enter.

Using the Jukebox

System Requirements

486/33; 4MB RAM; 8MB hard-drive space; Mouse (Win 3.1 users will need to be sure they've got the SHARE.EXE utility loaded)

These requirements are for loading our front end program only. Each game demo will have its own additional requirements, so be sure to read them carefully.



Click on one of six category buttons, and the demos in that category will appear on the monitor.

Click on the name of the demo you're interested in, and you'll receive installation info.

Attention Win95 Users

The new *PC Gamer* front end should work fine with Windows 95. To install and run some DOS game demos, you may need to reboot into a DOS session. If the videos appear as full-screen sequences, you should enter the Control Panel's Multimedia option and set it to View in Window.

Free Demos

Newsstand buyers now have the choice of purchasing either the CD-ROM Edition of PC Gamer for $7.99, or PC Gamer without a CD-ROM for $3.99. If you purchase the edition without a disc, you can still get free game demos because all *PC Gamer* readers have the opportunity to get demos and other goodies in a couple of different ways:

1. You can download demos and check out *PC Gamer*'s new look at our World Wide Web site at http://www.pcgamer.com on the Internet. Our Web site also features a special Strategy Plus section, links to other hot Web pages, and gaming news.

2. You can call our Customer Service department at (415) 696-1661 (between the hours of 9 a.m. and 5 p.m. PST) to have the CD mailed to you for only $5.95 shipping and handling.

Elevator Hints

So, you've broken the *PC Gamer* elevator, huh? Some guest you turned out to be.

If you can't figure out how to start the elevator moving down to our offices, think like a car thief. Have you ever hot-wired an elevator? Click on the sparking wires that were exposed when the elevator control panel fell apart, and you'll be on your way down to *PC Gamer* country.

Installation Shortcuts

In the event our front end doesn't load or run properly on your machine, you can still install each demo, bypassing our front end altogether.

To manually install a demo, take a look at the Command Box located to the right. This box contains a list of demos along with their directories and installation commands.

To get up and running using the Command Box, first switch to your CD-ROM drive and change to the appropriate directory by typing CD\DIRECTORY, where DIRECTORY is the one listed in the Command Table next to the game you're trying to install. Once in the appropriate directory, type the Install Command, then press Enter. For example, to install the *Command & Conquer* demo:

Type **CD\WESTWOOD\C&C_DEMO** and press Enter.

Type **INSTALL.EXE** and press Enter.

The demo will then be installed on your PC.

** on chart at right = Must install through Windows.* The Hive, Thexder, *and* Knight Moves *require Windows 95;* Comix Zone *comes in Windows 3.1 and Win95 versions.*

Contents/Manual Installation Commands

Demo	Directory	Installation Command
Command & Conquer	**\WESTWOOD\C&C_DEMO**	**INSTALL.EXE**
IndyCar Racing 2	**\ICR2**	**INSTALL.EXE**
Worms	**\WORMS**	**INSTALL.BAT**
Wipeout	\	**WIPEOUT.BAT**
Fantasy General	**\FANTASY**	**INSTALL.EXE**
Knight Moves *	**\KMDEMO**	**KNIGHT.EXE**
Tempest 2000	**\TEMPEST\SHARE**	**INSTALL.EXE**
Fighter Duel	**\FTRDUEL**	**INSTALL.BAT**
M. Ashley Teaches Chess*	**\CHESS**	**M2.EXE**
Expect No Mercy *	**\NOMERCY**	**INSTALL.EXE**
Extreme Pinball	**\EXTREME**	**INSTALL.EXE**
Mission Critical	**\MCDEMO**	**MISSION.EXE**
NHL '96	**\NHL96**	**NHLDEMO.EXE**
The Hive *	**\HIVE**	**THE_HIVE.EXE**
Thexder *	**\THEXDER**	**SETUP.EXE**
Darkseed II *	**\DARKSEED**	**SETUP.EXE**
Into the Void	**\VOID\ITVDEMO**	**INSTALL.EXE**
Comix Zone for Win 3.1 *	**\CZONE31**	**SETUP.EXE**
Comix Zone for Win '95 *	**\CZONE95**	**SETUP.EXE**
America Online *	**\AOL**	**AOL.EXE**
GNN *	**\GNN**	**SETUP.EXE**
Descent HOGs	**\DESCENT**	
Heretic WADs	**\HERETIC**	
Doom WADs	**\DOOM**	
Hexen WADs	**\HEXEN**	
Warcraft Levels	**\WARCRAFT**	
Bug Patches	**\PATCHES**	

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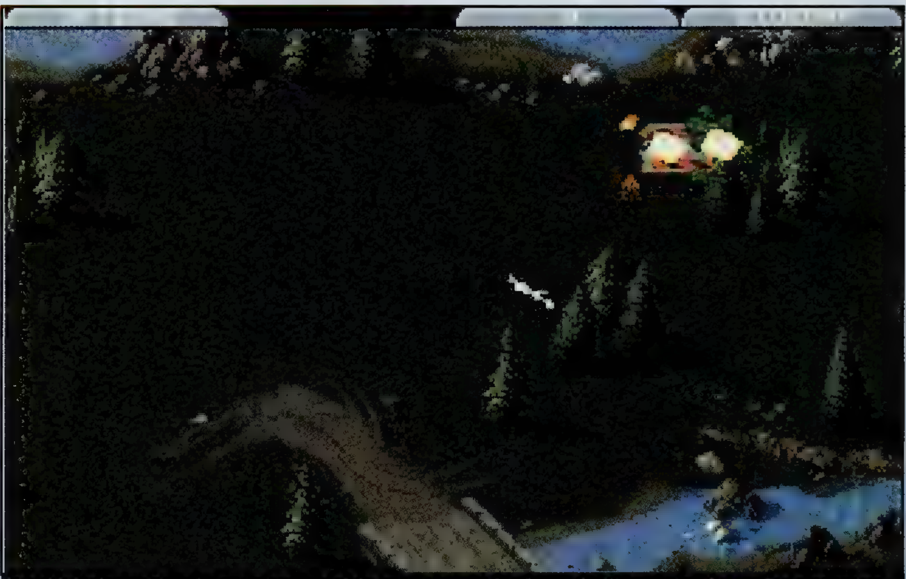
Product Information Number 151

Command & Conquer

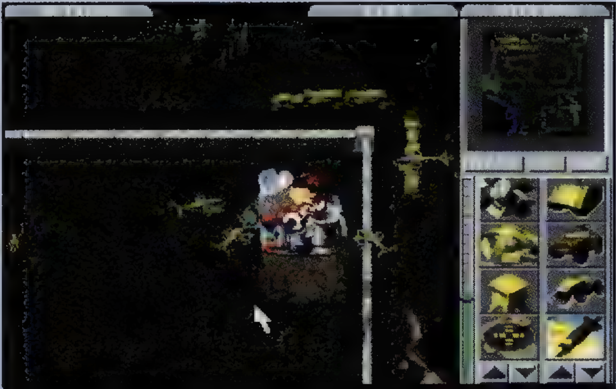
Company: Virgin
Tech Support: (714) 833-1999
Release Date: Available Now
Category: Action-Strategy
Required: 486DX/50; 8MB RAM; 20MB hard-drive space; VGA; Mouse
Install: \WESTWOOD\C&C_DEMO\INSTALL.EXE


The third mission introduces you to one of the most powerful units — the Commando. He carries explosives that can destroy any facility, and he can take out enemy infantry with one shot.

Command & Conquer's blend of strategy and non-stop action has been the cause for a lot of lost time around the *PC Gamer* offices. If you haven't seen this terrific game, now's your chance to check it out for yourself.

The story: A strange, crystalline plant is growing all over the face of the earth. Its appears to be from outer space, and scientists are working on solving the mystery of the plant, named tiberium, but one thing is already clear; it's a valuable energy source.

Meanwhile, a terrorist group that calls itself the Brotherhood of Nod, led by a mysterious figure known only as Kane, is carrying out a campaign aimed at world domination. Their only opposition is the Global Defense Initiative (GDI) — an army created by the United Nations to keep peace on the planet. In the full version of *Command & Conquer*, you can choose to command either side of the conflict. For this demo, you're given three missions as the GDI commander, fighting back the Nod incursion.


In the second mission of the demo, you'll need to build a bunch of Orcas. They're quite handy against enemy facilities, especially in groups.

Control of the game is completely mouse-driven; simply select one of your units and click on its destination or on the enemy unit you want it to attack. You can issue the same order to a group of units just as easily; simply move the mouse while holding the button down to "draw" a box around the units you want to select.

Don't let the ease of the interface lull you into complacency, though; you'll have to stay busy to keep ahead of the Nod, building structures, harvesting tiberium, and deploying your army intelligently. The three missions included in the demo aren't easy, so don't worry if it takes you a couple of tries to complete them.

The first thing you'll want to do is set up your mobile construction yard. That's the big awkward-looking unit (resting the cursor on a friendly unit will display its name after a few seconds). Open it up by double-clicking on it (you'll need to move it to pretty big clearing first, since it unfolds into a larger structure). You'll then be able to construct a power plant — do this by clicking on its picture in the sidebar on the right side of the screen. Money will be deducted from your stores as it is built. When it's ready, click on the picture, and then place it next to your construction yard; you can only place new structures adjacent to existing structures you own.

For more information on player control and how to manipulate your armies, consult the README.TXT file installed in the C&C directory on your hard drive. On slower computers, the game may run faster if you turn off the music at the Game Controls menu.

HINT

In the second demo mission (which is mission 10 in the full version of *Command & Conquer*), it's vital to have Orca helicopters; once you construct a barracks, you can build a helipad and start making these attack choppers. Keep in mind that once you've given them a destination and they've taken to the air, you can't select them with the mouse to change their orders until they land. To get around this, you can assign a group of helicopters to a number key (0-9) by pressing CTRL plus the number key.

Once you've done that, you'll be able to access your choppers instantly by tapping the chosen number key. This comes in handy when you want to tell the Orcas to stop chasing a fast-moving enemy unit that might lead them back to its base, where SAM missile sites undoubtedly wait to shoot the choppers down. Check the README.TXT file for more shortcut keys that'll help you overwhelm the Nod scum.

This handsome fella is the commanding officer of GDI troops. You'll get most of your mission briefings from him.

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WINDOWS95 – SPRING 1996

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Product Information Number 89

NHL Hockey '96

Company: Electronic Arts
Tech Support: (415) 572-2787
Release Date: Available Now
Category: Sports
Required: 486DX2/66; 8MB RAM; Local-bus video
Install: \NHL96\NHLDEMO.EXE

Sharpen up your skates and hit the ice — *NHL '96* is one of the best hockey sims for the PC, and now you can try it out for yourself in this demo from the creators of *FIFA '96 Soccer.*

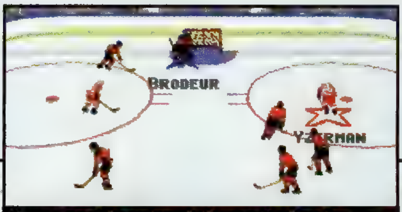
In this demo, you've got two whole minutes to experience the competitive thrill of pro hockey. But you'll be able to check, steal, and slap killer shots into the goal in those two minutes to your heart's delight.

Player control is simple. We recommend a gamepad for the full effect, but the mouse or keyboard works, too. The guy with the star under his skates is the player you're controlling (when you have the puck the star is filled in, otherwise it's hollow); you'll switch players as appropriate, either to the guy with the puck, or to the defender nearest to the offense. When the opposition goes for one of their fast break-aways, you can switch defenders by hitting button one. If you have control of the puck, button one on the joystick (or the left mouse button) will pass it one of your teammates — choose which one by presing in his direction. Button two (or the right mouse button) will fire a shot at the goal. You put more power behind the shot by holding the button down longer before releasing it. A quick tap will produce a fast slapshot. On defense, use button one to attempt a steal, and button two to check a nearby offensive player. Directional control is accomplished with the joystick, gamepad, the arrow keys on the keyboard, or by moving the mouse.

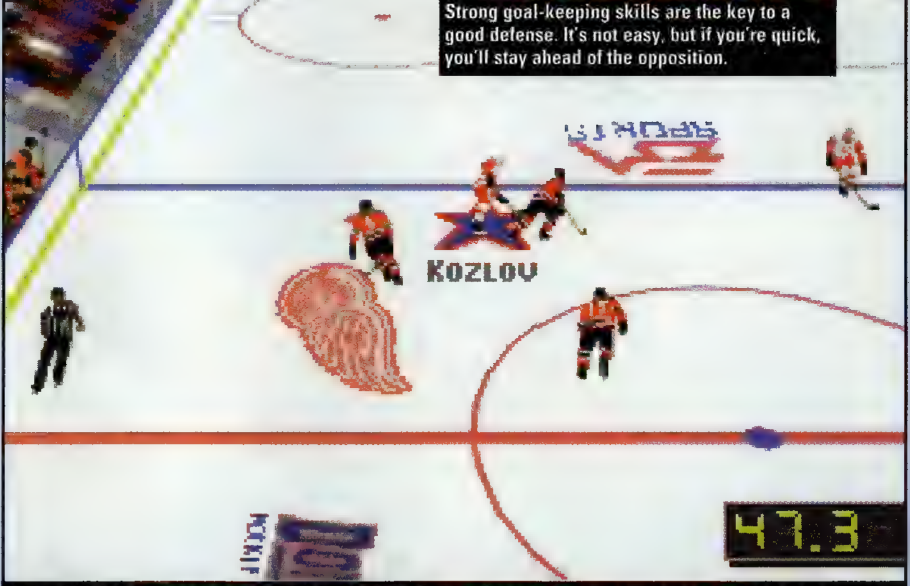
When you load up the demo and choose your teams, you'll see a screen with four sliders. To choose which side you want to play on, click on either side of the first slider. Clicking on the icon that appears lets you set your controller type. If you choose the joystick, you'll be able to specify a digital device like a gamepad, or an analog device like a traditional PC stick. A "1" in the corner of the joystick icon tells the game to look for a digital device, and a "2" tells it to look for an analog controller. These settings can be changed at any time during the game by hitting the Escape key and clicking on the Controllers button. You

CHALLENGE

If you think the two-minute limit doesn't give you much time to score, think again — our deputy editor Todd managed three goals before time ran out. How many shots can you slap past the goalie in 120 seconds?



Strong goal-keeping skills are the key to a good defense. It's not easy, but if you're quick, you'll stay ahead of the opposition.



Since *NHL '96* is a licensed product from the NHL Players Association, you can expect to see all the names and current stats from the National Hockey League.

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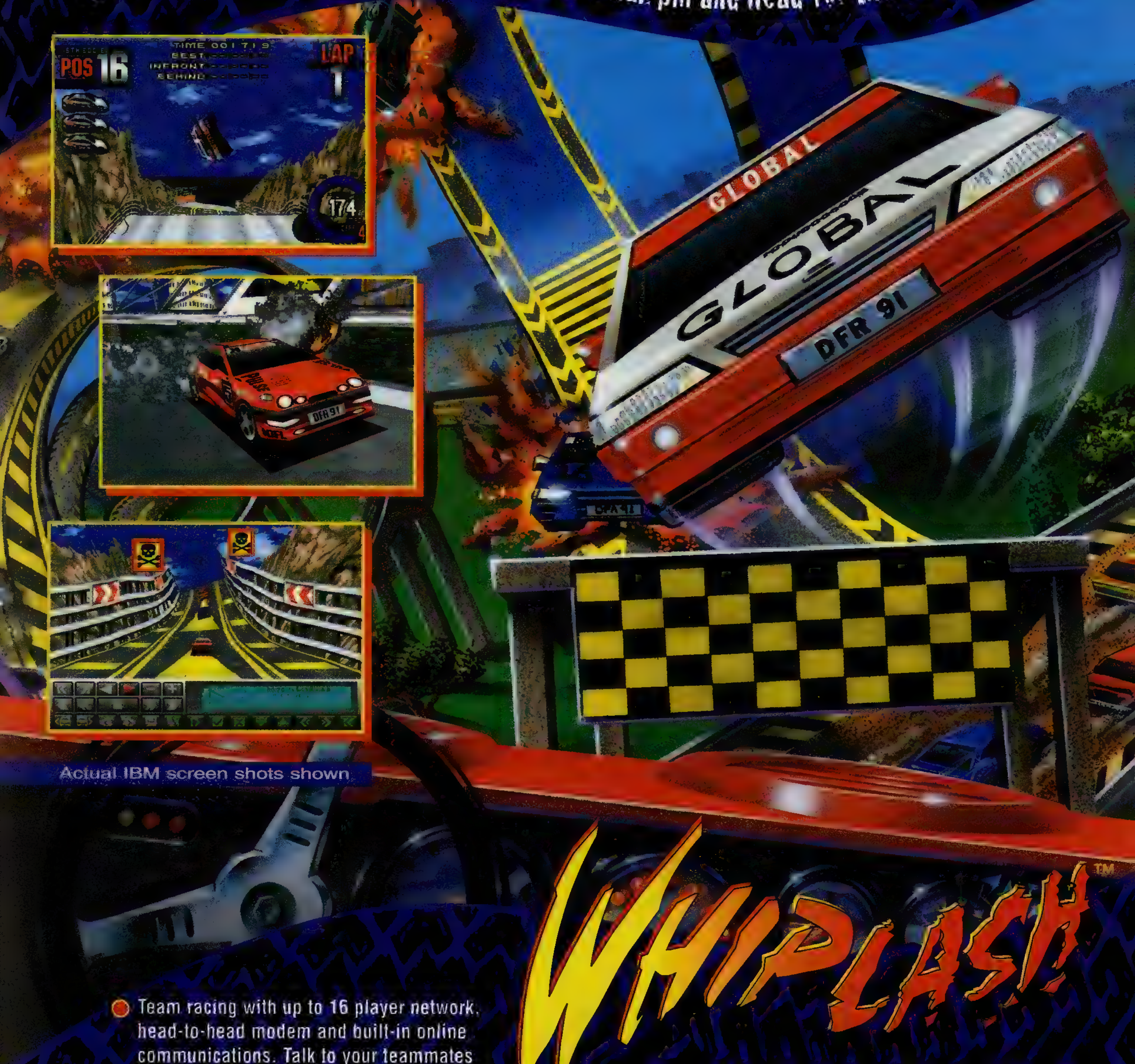
Product Information Number 82

SNAP, CRACKLE, DROP!

"Holy $#%@!...I'm toast. Ram the rookie at the hairpin and head for the checkered."



Actual IBM screen shots shown

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WLP3

Product Information Number 126

IndyCar Racing II

Company: Papyrus
Tech Support: (617) 868-3103
Release Date: Available Now
Category: Racing Sim
Required: 486/33; 8MB RAM; 15MB hard-drive space; VGA
Install: \ICR2\INSTALL.EXE

Melting tires and twisting tracks are only the beginning in this sequel to a Papyrus classic. *IndyCar Racing II* once again puts you in control of an open-wheel racer, pitting you against computerized drivers and the clock in a fierce and exciting contest of skill, concentration, and speed.

With its variable, realistic driving model and tracks from all over the world, *IndyCar Racing II* takes the spectacular action and graphics of *IndyCar Racing* to a whole new level.

You'll take a spin around two tracks in this demo: Laguna Seca and Michigan. Laguna Seca puts you in a winding road race, while Michigan is a simple oval track. You'll be able to warm up in the practice session or try your hand at a full race against as many as 32 opponents. Watch those corners, though; if you don't slow down, you're liable to tear up your ride.

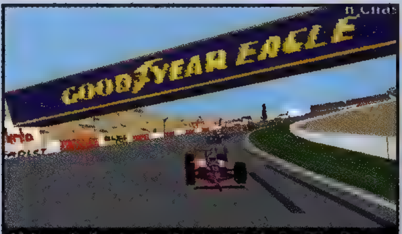
If you'd like, you can adjust the resolution from VGA to SVGA by adding "-H" on the command line to run the program (for example, type "INDYCAR -H"). From inside the program, you can toggle the game's graphic detail options on and off at the Options menu or by pressing keys 0-9.

The full version of *IndyCar II* sports 15 different tracks a Paintshop utility that lets you customize your car's appearance, and modem support that lets you take to the track against a friend.

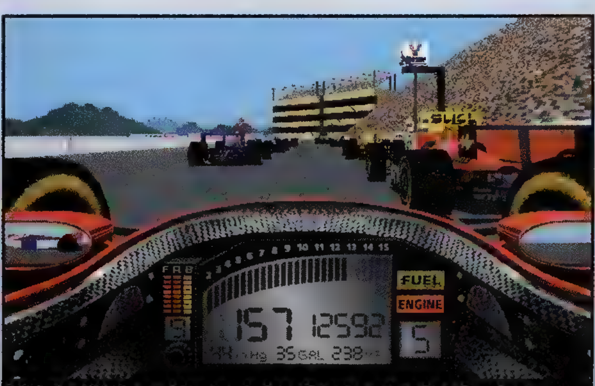
You steer your car with the joystick, accelerating with button one and braking with button two. Pull the stick back to throw your racer into reverse. You can calibrate your stick or select a different control layout at the Options menu. Pitting is not enabled in this demo, so if your car takes too much damage, you'll have to start the race over.

HINT

Although Circuit Judges won't necessarily approve of this method, you can improve your chances of winning a race by taking out your opposition. A carefully handled nudge to the back tire of a car in front of you could result in your opponent uncontrollably spinning into a wall, disabling him for the rest of the race. Be careful, though — you could end up putting yourself out of contention.



Although the replay feature is limited in this demo version, you can watch a particularly cool maneuver over and over again.



With the SVGA graphics toggled on, there's a stunning view from inside the cockpit of your racer.

Simon the sorcerer II
adventure soft

If you've ever puked in your shoes, you'll love this game.

When you play Simon the Sorcerer II, puking in your shoes is just one of the many twisted little moves you'll make to survive an adventure filled with over 100 bizarre characters. Like woodworms, wizards, gargoyles, runts and washerwomen, to name a few.

And when you're not worshipping the old porcelain goddess, Simon's killer hand-drawn graphics, brain-scorching riddles and ear-pummeling, CD quality sound will be more than enough to keep you gagging for more.

Simon the Sorcerer II
So much fun it'll make you sick.

PC CD ROM ©1995 Psygnosis, Ltd. http://www.sony.com

Product Information Number 154

WipeOut

Company: Psygnosis
Tech Support: (415) 655-5683
Release Date: Available Now
Category: Racing Sim
Required: 486DX/33; 8MB RAM; VGA; Mouse
Install: \WIPEOUT\WIPEOUT.EXE

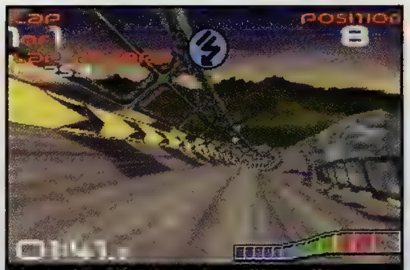
Psygnosis brings us yet another great game with *WipeOut*, a racing sim that'll really gets your adrenaline flowing. In the year 2052, anti-gravity racing is the world's sport of choice. With machines that never touch the ground, amazing speeds can be reached. You are a participant in the F3600 Anti-Gravity Racing League, racing some of the fastest vehicles on the planet, and the competition is hot.

HINT

Controlling your craft with the keyboard can be a bit tricky. Make sure to use your airbrakes to keep yourself on track, or you might find yourself hitting the wall.

As you speed your way to the finish line, you'll come across flashing panels on the track. Drive over a panel, and it'll give you a special weapon or ability, which you can activate by pressing the Alt key. The color of the panel determines which item you gain. An icon for the item will appear at the top of the screen; check out the chart below for descriptions of what the icons represent.

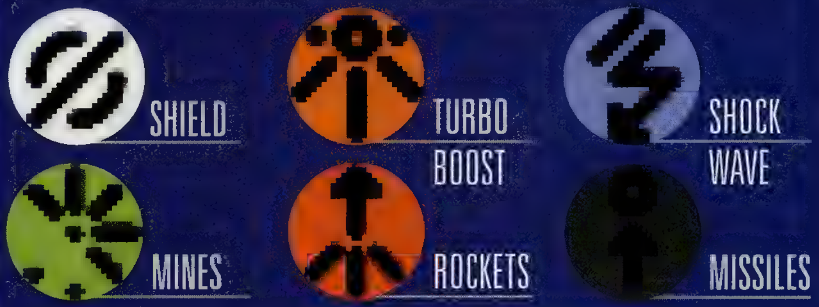
The controls are rather simple. The right and left arrow keys steer your racer, and the Control key speeds you up. To deploy left and right air brakes, you press Z or X, respectively. The Tab key will change your view, and you can adjust the graphic detail with functions keys one through four. To leave the demo, press P to pause the game, and you'll be given the option to exit.



The track in *WipeOut* is almost like a roller-coaster with its steep inclines and hairpin turns.

ICON IDENTITY

Here's a list of special items and the icons that represent them. Use them well — you only get one chance with each until the next flashing panel.

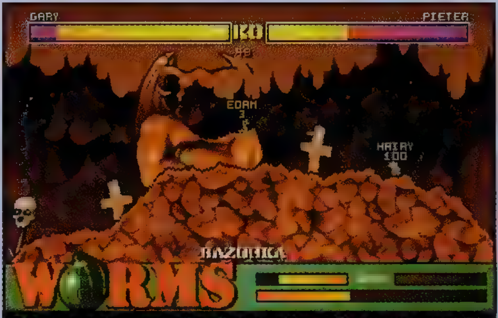


Worms

Company: Ocean of America
Tech Support: (408) 289-1200
Release Date: Available Now
Category: Puzzle-Strategy
Required: 486/33; 4MB RAM; 3MB hard-drive space; VGA; Mouse
Install: \WORMS\INSTALL.BAT

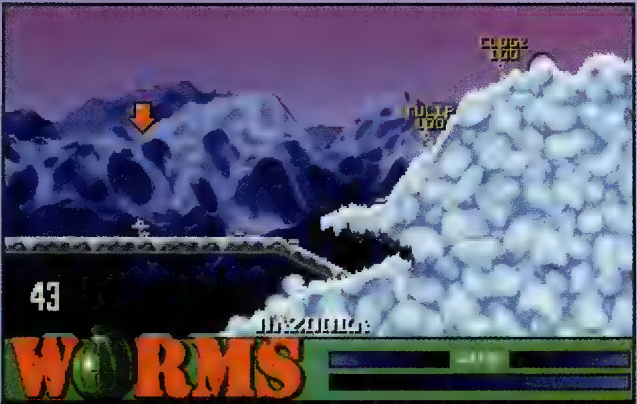
Remember those old shareware titles like *Scorched Earth* or *Tank War*, where tanks faced off on a battlefield, and you tried to destroy the enemy by calculating the velocity and angle of your fire? Well, the battle no longer belongs to tanks alone — now worms are getting into the fray.

These squiggly little critters enter the battlefield armed to the teeth with bazookas, homing missiles, grenades — even air strikes. Two worm armies will meet on ice or fire, and the victor will be the one who can successfully calculate wind direction, power, and the appropriate weapon needed to kill off the opposition.



Things can get pretty hot down under. This statue wasn't that pretty, anyway...

When you start the game, *Worms* is set up for a battle between two human players — if you want a one-player challenge, you can tell the computer to control one side in the Options menu. You control the worms with a combination of the mouse and keyboard. A right click on the mouse will bring up your weapons selection. Choose what you think will do the most damage, but remember that if something comes in a limited number, it's not just limited for that worm, but for the whole army.



In the snowy wastes of the first level, you'll have to be careful not to slide into any mines on the rather slippery bridge.

The up and down arrows will determine the angle of attack, if the weapon needs one. If you call in an air strike or use the transporter, you will be able to click on the target with the mouse pointer. To move or change a worm's direction, use the left and right arrows. Pressing the spacebar will fire your weapon, and the amount of time you hold it down determines the power behind it. Bazookas are especially effective and unlimited in number, but it's difficult to get one to hit exactly where you want it.

The full version of *Worms* will let you play with up to sixteen people on a network, and it'll give your worms weapons and abilities not included in this demo, like the bungee jump, bat-rope, and banana bombs. Who knew a bunch of slimy worms could be this much fun?

CHALLENGE

If you play against the computer, you'll notice that it has perfect aim when it comes to firing at you. If you manage to beat it at its own game, it'll be one for the record books.

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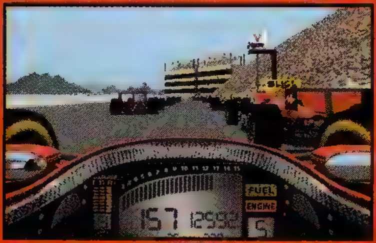
FEATURING

Command & Conquer

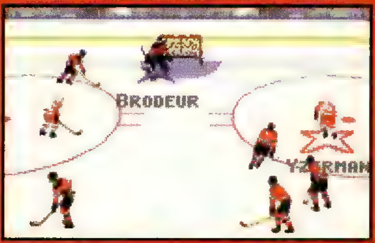
See for yourself why everyone's talking about Virgin's hot action-strategy game.

INDYCAR RACING II



Papyrus comes through with the big sequel racing fans everywhere have been begging for.

NHL HOCKEY '96



Hockey fans, rejoice! Get a taste of the best installment yet in Electronic Arts' great PC sports series.

MISSION CRITICAL

You co-star with Star Trek's Michael Dorn in this spectacular science fiction graphic adventure from Legend.

PLUS...

- Comix Zone
- Darkseed II
- Expect No Mercy
- Extreme Pinball
- Fantasy General
- Fighter Duel
- Into the Void
- Knight Moves
- Maurice Ashley Teaches Chess
- Tempest 2000
- The Hive
- Thexder
- WipeOut

ALSO...NEW LEVELS FOR *DESCENT, DOOM, HEXEN,* AND *WARCRAFT!*

PC GAMER

Dear PC Gamers,

We're especially proud of this month's issue, because in it we're unveiling our all-new CD — the culmination of months of work. Our New CD boasts a new Windows interface that does more than just serve up the best game demos in the industry; with the New CD, you'll actually enter the virtual world of *PC Gamer*, where you can poke around our desks, listen to our voice mail, and access all our fact-filled files.

Oh, and you'll also get to talk with Cheryl, our omnipresent receptionist. Pay attention to her, because she'll face a dilemma right off the bat and she's gonna need your help with it. See, our monkey's missing — it's a long story. All you need to know is that we're serious about getting him back, and we're going to give the winner of our "Find Our Monkey" contest the finest PC gaming machine known to man...

Oh, and one more thing. While the look and feel of *The CD* has changed, its quality content hasn't. As always, you can count on the *PC Gamer* CD to bring you the best in fully interactive game demos — and any other good stuff we can get our hands on.

What're you waiting for? Fire up the New CD — and enjoy!

Yours,

Matt Firme
Publisher, *PC Gamer*

Imagine Publishing Inc.
1350 Old Bayshore Highway, Suite 210, Burlingame, California 94010
Telephone: (415) 696-1688 Fax: (415) 696-1678

Fighter Duel

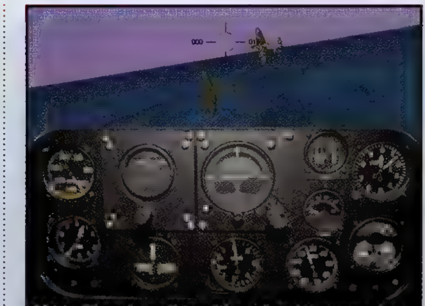
Company: Phillips
Tech Support: (800) 340-7888
Release Date: Available Now
Category: Flight Sim
Required: 486DX/33; 8MB RAM; 17MB hard-drive space; SVGA; Mouse
Install: \FTRDUEL\INSTALL.BAT

Fighter Duel is a painstakingly true-to-life World War Two flight sim. With its realistic flight models, *Fighter Duel* is targeted at die-hard air combat jocks; you'll truly feel as if you're wrestling a WWII fighter through its paces. The demo puts you in the cockpit of the Spitfire Mark 1 in a preset scenario called Flying Circus.

The full version will contain 13 classic WWII fighter planes and seven tactical missions. You'll be able to fly against eight computerized opponents or hook up with a friend via modem for some head-to-head combat, which is *Fighter Duel*'s greatest strength.

Depending on how much system memory you have free, you can have as many as eight enemies in the air at once. In order to fly your ship, look at the keyboard keys at the right, or use a joystick.

You can adjust the realism and difficulty by clicking on Single Player from the main menu. From there, you can set the number of opponents, and such options as Stalling and Pilot Blackouts. However, the scenario, plane type, and flight time can't be changed. In order to fly with these options, click on Begin Duel. If you want to go ahead and fly with the default settings, click on Quick Flight from the main menu, and you'll enter directly into battle.


Ahhh. There's nothing like a bright, sunny day with plenty of enemy craft to blow out of the sky...

CHALLENGE

Hitting enemy aircraft isn't as easy as it sounds, but we were able to take five of them down before the three minutes were up. That either means we're good joystick jockeys, or we spent far too much time playing this one.

Control Keys

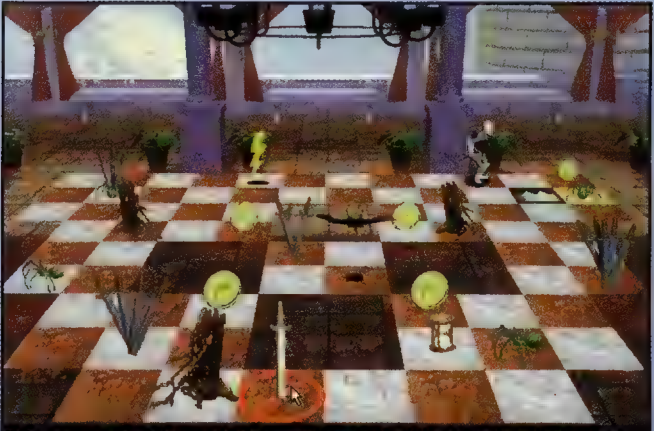
Instrument Panel On/Off	Space
Turbo Mode (16X Normal Time)	T
Throttle Up	Z
Throttle Down	X
Flaps Up	W
Flaps Down	E
Rudder Left	V
Rudder Right	B
Pause	P
Exit	ESC

You can also configure your joystick from the menu; if you have one with a hat switch, you can set it up to control your viewpoints. Also, take a look at the View Plane button — you'll get a beautifully rendered model of the Spitfire Mark 1 in all its glory, and you'll be able to admire it from any direction you choose.

Knight Moves

Win95

Company: Spectrum HoloByte
Tech Support: (510) 522-1164
Release Date: Available Now
Category: Action/Puzzle
Required: Windows 95; 486DX2/66; 8MB RAM; SVGA
Install: \KMDEMO\KNIGHT.EXE


Things can get a bit crazy in the upper levels. And the demo is only the first few levels of the full game!

If you're one of the movers and shakers who've upgraded to Windows 95, here's your chance to sample *Tetris* creator Alexey Pajitnov's newest brain teaser, *Knight Moves*. In this arcade-puzzle game, you've got to lead a gallant knight on his errand to destroy the Adversary, an evil magician whose diabolical plan to rule the world has plunged mankind into the greatest dark age ever known. In order to defeat the Adversary, you must gather precious items and overcome obstacles such as resurrected monsters, living tree stumps, and pumpkin-heads that would give Washington Irving's ghost of Sleepy Hollow a scare.

In order to make your way through the various levels of the game, you have to gather all the coins, swords, or other items on the board. Your knight moves in traditional chess fashion — two squares up, and one square over — but once you set him in motion, he never stops. It's up to you to make sure he always has a safe place to land. If he lands on a monster, he's dead (he's not a terribly valiant knight). Once you have gathered all the essential items, work your way toward landing on the square with the crown, and you'll be transported to the next level.

If you gather the items and make it to the crown square, you'll be whisked away to the next level.

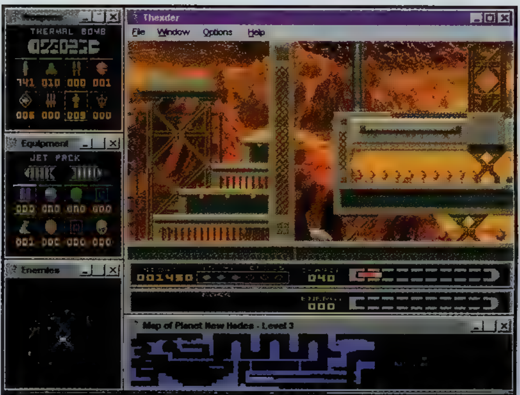
Typical of Mr. Pajitnov's work, *Knight Moves* is extremely simple in execution, but addictive in gameplay. It'll take a lot of intuition and quite a bit of thought to get the knight to the Adversary's lair. You might want to remember that if you don't choose a new location for the knight to jump to, he'll go back to the previously occupied spot. In the lower levels, that helps to get the timing right to move in and take an item before a monster gets ya.

Thexder

Win95

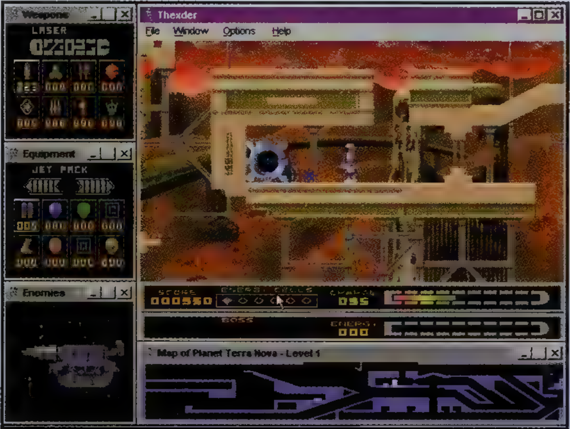
Company: Sierra
Tech Support: (800) 757-7707
Release Date: Available Now
Category: Arcade
Required: 486DX2/66; 8MB RAM; 1MB hard-drive space; VGA; Windows 95
Install: \THEXDER\SETUP.EXE

Far in the future, people are reproducing far too quickly for comfortable evolution to be an option. With the public blaming the galactic government for massive amounts of unemployment, crime, and overcrowding, riots and rebellion are the norm on most planets. Since their present security system was inadequate for the task of keeping civilization intact, the Interplanetary Security Force (ISF) created the THX-DR112, a multi-form robot that could transform into several vehicles — from a bulldozer-type machine to a flying vehicle — as well as its humanoid form. Unfortunately, Thexder (as the security robot was nicknamed) could not live up to the needs of the day, since it required a human (who was prone to error) to pilot it.


Weapons
THERMAL BOMB
Equipment
JET PACK
Enemies
Thexder
File Window Options Help
001450
040
000
Map of Planet New Hades - Level 3

You'll need to use Thexder's crawling form to get through some of the narrower tunnels on the higher levels.

As a result, the PRM-TC169 was created — code-named Primus Tech. Using a sophisticated computer brain, which received its input from the scientist who created him, Primus was to be the savior of law. However, during final testing, Primus Tech overrode the security protocols and sucked the scientist's mind into his computerized one. Escaping the laboratory, Primus Tech set out to rule the galaxy, reprogramming robots and biologicals as he goes. The only hope for the ISF, and mankind itself, is Thexder.


Weapons
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Equipment
JET PACK
Enemies
Thexder
File Window Options Help
SCORE
000550
ENERGY CELLS
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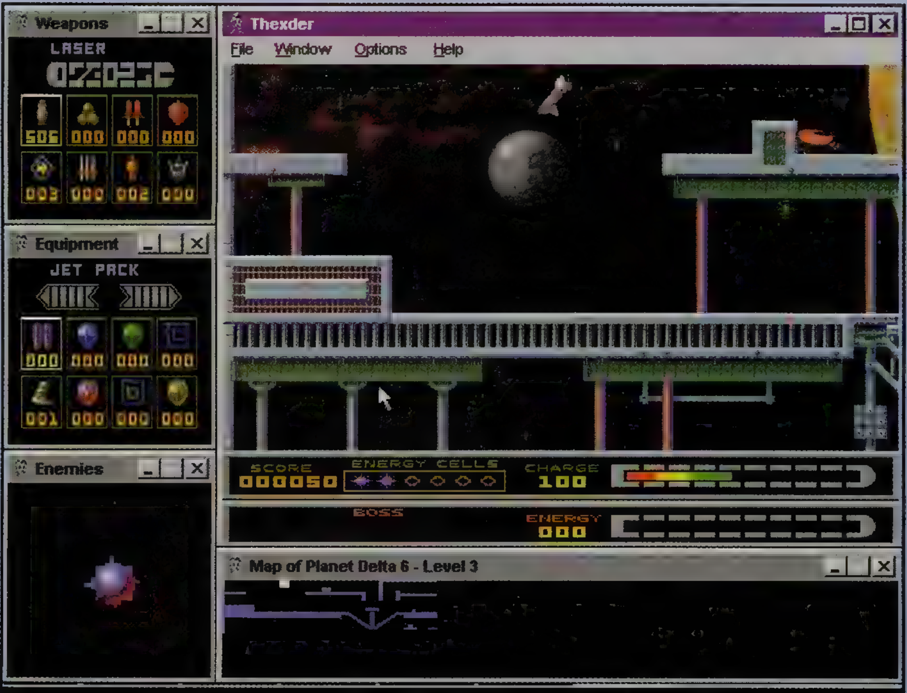
Map of Planet Terra Nova - Level 1

These portals are the gateways to the next level. You can usually reach one with relative ease, but if you haven't gathered everything on the level, you might want to come back to it later.

Thexder can be controlled using the keypad and a few other keys. Look below for a list of keyboard commands. Not only do you get to battle the minions of Primus Tech in this demo, but limited multi-player functions are included. You can play with as many as four opponents on the first level — in the full version, you'll be able to play with ten opponents on almost 36,000 randomly generated levels. Utilizing Windows 95's multi-threading functions, *Thexder* gives you an entertaining platform shooter with a multitude of windows for controlling your security robot.

TECHNICAL NOTE: *Thexder* requires that you have at least a 486DX2/66 and Windows 95.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Enemies
Thexder
File Window Options Help
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ENERGY CELLS
CHARGE
100
BOSS
ENERGY
000
Map of Planet Delta 6 - Level 3

Thexder has the ability to transform into a few different vehicles. Right now he's morphing into a jet plane.

Control Keys

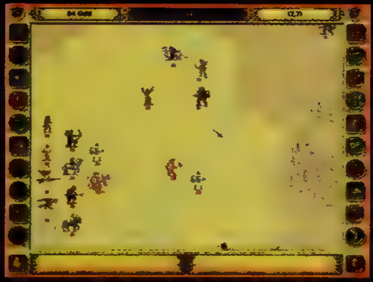
Move Up Left / Jump Left	home
Move Up / Jump	↑
Move Up Right / Jump Right	page up
Move Left	←
Move Right	→
Move Down Left	end
Move Down	↓
Move Down Right	page down
Transform Thexder to ... Walking Form	ins
Flying Form	*
Crawling Form	−
Shoot Selected Weapon	Spacebar
Swap Primary & Secondary Weapons	+
Select Next Weapon	S
Select Previous Weapon	A

Fantasy General

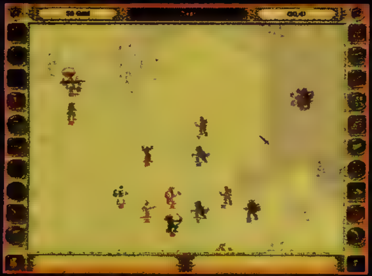
Company: SSI
Tech Support: (408) 737-6850
Release Date: Available Now
Category: Strategy
Required: 486/33; 8MB RAM; 28MB hard-drive space; SVGA; Mouse
Install: \FANTASY\INSTALL.EXE

The Orc King Dagga and his dark forces are sweeping across the land. Only you, the Archmage Krell, backed by the political force of the Council of Five, can stop the spread of evil. Prepare yourself for a battle of wits, magic, and cunning.

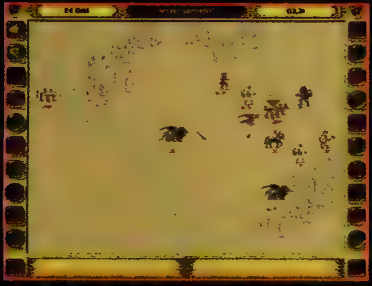
TAKING THE FIELD



When you first start the battle, send a few units to capture the altar and standing stones, but send the majority of your army to the northeast.



While hitting Dagga's army head-on, keep rotating troops to the back and resting them while you press forward with fresh recruits.



Eventually, after you've worn the enemy down, there'll only be one unit left, and you'll have the pleasure of accepting Dagga's surrender.

SSI, known for their high standard of quality strategy gaming, has broken the barrier between traditional war simulations and fantasy. Instead of panzers and machine gun infantry, *Fantasy General* uses sorcerers, unicorns, and harpies to wage war against orcs, goblins, and serpent riders. Though the players are different, it's still a war of strategy and planning, and the one who thinks ahead the farthest wins.

The demo is controlled solely by the mouse. Click on the skull in the upper right corner of the map to start the war campaign. Click the left mouse button in the light-colored hexes to place your units — one unit to a hex. When you have placed the last of the units, your first turn will begin.

Click on a unit you wish to move, and the pattern of light-colored hexes will change to indicate the possible destinations available for it. To attack another unit, move your unit next to the enemy. The cursor will turn into a sword, and by clicking on the enemy, you'll send your troops into battle. Each unit starts with 15 members. When that number reaches zero, the unit is dead.

You have fifteen turns to either conquer the enemy completely or have more surviving units. For more information on how to play the game, consult the README.TXT file copied to your hard drive.

When you are able to purchase additional units for battle, the Army Management icon will no longer be greyed out. If you click on it, you will be presented with a screen that will allow you to add more recruits to your army. Since you won't be able to move the new unit until your next turn, we suggest picking flying creatures, such as Balloon Bombadiers, that can travel vast distances quickly. We've also noticed that flying creatures do a great job of wearing down stronger units in key ares such as a city or town.

If you manage to defeat Dagga, you'll have one more opportunity to send him running. Make sure you add more units to your army, though, or *you* might take a beating.

HINT

If you move immediately to capture the altar (at the bottom right of the map) and the standing stones (top left of the map) you will receive more money that you can use to buy more units. Also, if a particular unit is almost dead, you can recharge it by letting it rest for a turn. Different units recharge at different rates, however.

See Buster.
See Buster
swim.
Swim,
Buster,
swim.

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IBM PC screenshots may vary.

Product Information Number 150

Into the Void

Company: Playmates Interactive Entertainment
Tech Support: (714) 562-1720
Release Date: Available Now
Category: Strategy
Required: 486DX/33; 8MB RAM; 40MB hard-drive space; VGA; Mouse;
Install: \VOID\ITVDEMO\INSTALL.EXE

There's no such thing as too many good space strategy games, and Playmates Interactive's *Into the Void* is the latest.

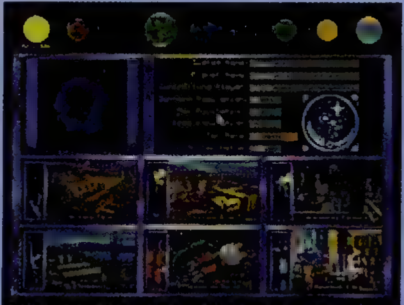
Using a unique interface based on what Playmates calls "palette menus," you can manage your resources with ease and simplicity. The menu descriptions below should help you get started; for details on how to use the interface and a guide on what to do first, consult the README.TXT file in the /PLAYMATE/ITV directory the demo created on your hard drive.

The goal of the game is to become Emperor of your people (you start off as an Average Ruler and work your way up). Each of the different races (there are six to choose from) has its own style and personality; some races place more emphasis on aggression, while others believe diplomacy is the best policy.

In order to gain popularity with your subjects, you have to score points based on what they believe is a good decision. For example, the Mordean people are very aggressive, so if you attack other races, they'll think you're the greatest thing since sliced bread, and you'll rise to power quickly. However, the Kimmer are a peaceful race, so constant aggression will hurt your campaign for supremacy. With each race requiring different strategies, there's a lot of replay value here.

HINT

In this demo, you'll get 50 turns and only two out of five possible tech levels to research. Since the time is so short, try to expand beyond your planet as soon as possible. It helps to put all your free population into your Agro facility right at the beginning and max out your population. You can then put people to work in your factories and research labs to create colony ships.


This screen is where you'll control your colonies' growth to the stars.

This satellite warns you of an incoming invasion — Ronald Reagan, eat your heart out.

See Buster gnaw the flesh from your hand until it's just a boney stump.
Virgin Interactive Entertainment
1 of the 50 demented characters you'll find in TOONSTRUCK coming soon for PC-CD ROM.

Product Information Number 180

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jjgray@ix.netcom.com

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Comix Zone

Win95

Company: Sega
Tech Support: (800) 872-7342
Release Date: Available Now
Category: Action/Arcade
Required: 486/33; 8MB RAM; 3MB hard-drive space; Windows 3.1 or 95
Install: \CZONE31\SETUP.EXE (For Windows 3.1)
\CZONE95\SETUP.EXE (For Windows 95)

When the evil Mortus escapes the confines of his comic book world, he manages to put his creator, artist Sketch Turner, in his place. Now it's up to Sketch to survive battles with Mortus' mutants and get out of the comic book world that he himself created. Luckily, when Sketch was transported to the comic world, he was given super powers, so he can at least defend himself appropriately. Also, his pet rat, Roadkill, has morphed into a being of awesome strength — the little rodent now packs a powerful electrical punch! With his help and some quick fingers on your part, Sketch can give those Mortus Mutants a shock they'll never forget!

If Sketch is killed inside his own comic book, Mortus will become real, and the results on the real world would be devastating. You need to get Sketch safely to the end of the book and put Mortus out of commission for good. To do this, you can either use a gamepad (recommended) or the keyboard. In the full version, there are three episodes, each set on two pages of the comic book. The demo will let you battle your way to the end of the first page. But watch that last jump — it'll take some skillful timing to get past the final hurdle. Look above for the keyboard commands you'll need to beat Mortus' goons. If you're using a gamepad, the directional pad will control movement, button one will perform an action (punch, pull a lever, etc.) and button two will jump. The inventory keys (1-3) will work for both keyboard and gamepad.

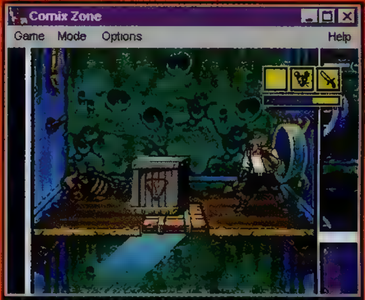
This is one of many planned conversions from Sega Genesis to the PC. Sega is demonstrating that quick gameplay and precise handling are now possible on the PC under Windows, and even the most vehement videogamer will have to agree that the PC is becoming a viable source for action gaming.

Control Keys

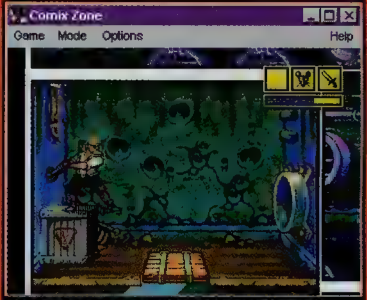
Move Left	←
Move Right	→
Down/Crouch/Pick Up Item	↓
Aim High	↑
Perform Action	X
Jump	Z
Use Left Inventory Item	1
Use Middle Inventory Item	2
Use Right Inventory Item	3

Crate Cleverness

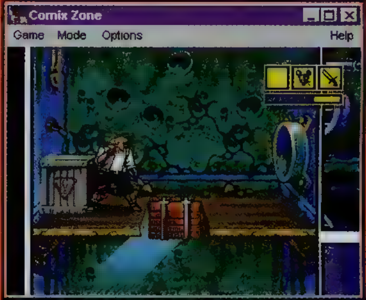
Follow these steps to get through the trap door covered by the crate. Be careful how you treat the giant box, though — you might regret anything rash.



Even though you're warned about it, you'll need to use this crate before you can hit the switch on the far wall.



Push the crate against the wall, and when you hop up onto it, you'll be able to grab the switch.



A quick tap on the action button, and you'll continue on your merry way fighting evil.

Mission Critical

Company: Legend Entertainment
Tech Support: (800) 658-8891
Release Date: Available Now
Category: Graphic Adventure
Required: 486DX2/66; 8MB RAM; SVGA
Install: \MCDEMO\MISSION.EXE

The fifteen-year war between the United Nations and the Alliance of Free States is heating up — and things aren't looking good for the Alliance.

You're a member of the crew of the USS *Lexington*, making its way to an unknown planet on an unknown mission. You're escorting a science vessel, but only your captain knows what it's carrying, or why it needs an escort. When you're attacked by a UN ship, the *Lexington*'s only viable option seems to be surrender — until the captain makes a desperate move that destroys the enemy vessel and every member of the *Lexington*'s crew ... except you.

Now it's up to you to figure out what happened to the rest of the crew and what the *Lexington*'s secret mission was, and to see that the mission is carried out.

HINT

It's pretty obvious when you start the game that there's a hull puncture on Deck Two, the deck you're on, and the *Lexington* is leaking precious air. But before you can enter the room the puncture is in, you'll need to get a handy book from the captain's desk in his quarters. To get into the captain's quarters, read the note you're carrying when the game starts.

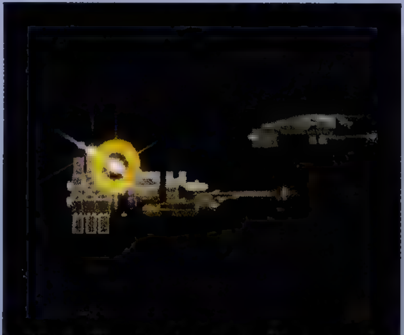
Mission Critical, Legend Entertainment's newest graphic adventure, stars *Star Trek: The Next Generation*'s Michael Dorn (otherwise known as Worf) and Patricia Charbonneau from *Robo-Cop II*. Legend has meshed digitized video, a 3D-rendered environment, and an intriguing story line into an adventure that works very well.

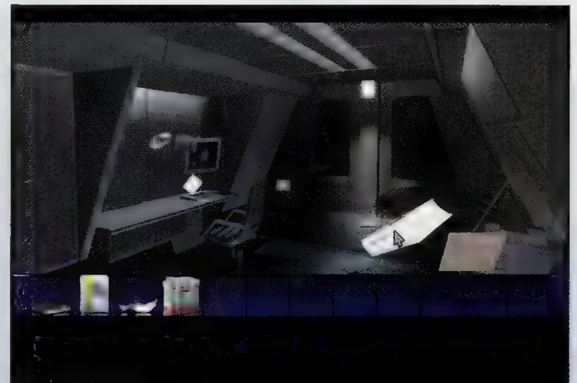
The game's story is told from a first-person perspective, and the mouse is your controller; click the left button when the cursor points in the direction you wish to go, or when it's over an item you want to look at or pick up. Any items you grab are stored in the inventory bar at the bottom of the screen. To use an item, simply click on it, then choose the appropriate action from the list of verbs that appear in the upper left corner of the screen. A right-click of the mouse will cancel any selection.

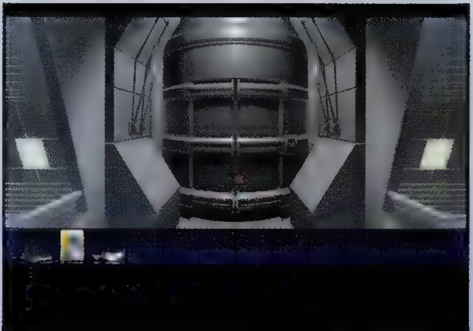
You can access the menu bar by moving the cursor to the top of the screen. The Save and Load commands are disabled in the demo, but you can access the Options menu or exit the program from here.

With its stunning rendered backgrounds and evocative story line, we're sure this taste of *Mission Critical* will leave you yearning for more. In the full version, you'll have to repair the crippled *Lexington*, battle UN ships, and explore the mysterious planet below.

TECHNICAL NOTE: Since the game runs entirely from the CD-ROM, you cannot save your progress. Don't worry, though — you won't have to fear death in this demo.


In the exciting introduction, you'll see exactly what caused the mess you start out in.


Here's the source of your trouble; the hull puncture. Boy, talk about a wind storm!


Before you can use this elevator to go to the next level, you'll have to take care of the hull puncture on Deck Two.

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—*SurfDog*, Hanalei, HI
surfdog@aloha.net

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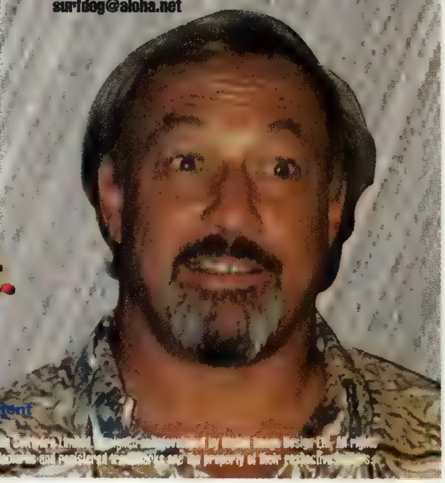

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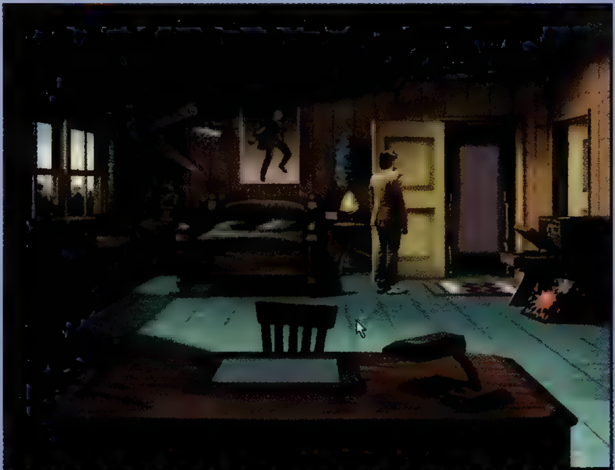
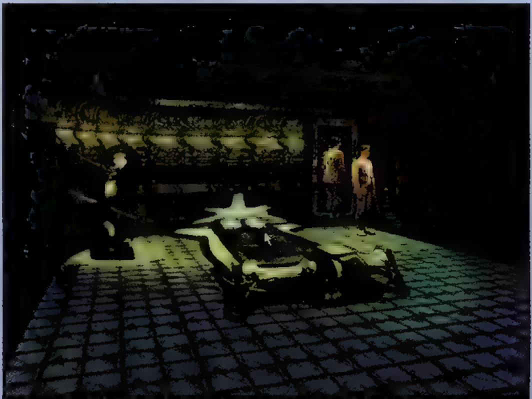
Darkseed II

Company: Cyberdreams
Tech Support: (818) 222-9348
Release Date: Available Now
Category: Graphic Adventure
Required: 486/33; 8MB RAM; 3MB hard-drive space; SVGA; Windows 3.1 or higher
Install: \DARKSEED\SETUP.EXE

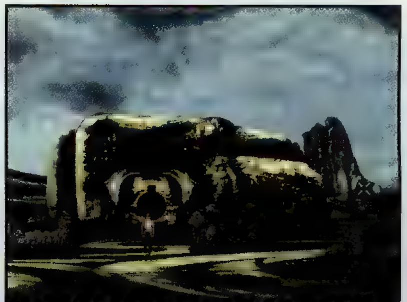
If you thought *Darkseed* hero Mike Dawson's terrifying experiences with the Ancients of the Dark World were over, think again. Mike is back, and so are the Ancients, with a plot to take over the planet Earth and destroy the human race.

Using digitized video and sound, *Darkseed II* is a beautiful graphic adventure. Framed for the murder of his high school sweetheart, Mike is searches for the true killer and tries to hold onto his sanity. You'll begin the adventure safely in the real world, in your childhood bedroom. The demo will let you explore the house and speak to your mother, but you won't be able to leave the front porch. You can, however, travel to the Dark World through the mirror hidden in your bedroom.


The game opens in Mike's bedroom. Looks like he spends a lot of time there. But what's that odd mirror doing in his closet?


The other side of of the mirror reveals an oddly familiar bedroom for a creature we'd probably rather not see.

The interface is all mouse-driven. Right-clicking will rotate between three mouse actions — Examine, Use, and Move. In Examine mode, the cursor looks like a question mark. When you can look at something closely, it will turn into a exclamation point. While in Use mode, the icon will resemble a hand. When you can perform an action, it'll change to a pointing finger. The Move icon will look like an arrow, and when you can leave the screen through a door or portal, it will become four inward-pointing arrows.


The eerie landscapes are definitely reminiscent of H.R. Giger's work.

To access your inventory, simply move the cursor to the bottom of the screen, and it will appear. To use an object, just click to select it, then click again where you want to use it. The main menu can be reached by moving the mouse to the top of the screen.

Like its predecessor, *Darkseed II* features disturbing artwork by the award-winning H.R. Giger, best known for his creatures and set designs for the hit movie *Alien.* The landscapes he creates are nightmarish, and his monsters even more so. If you normally play games late at night, this is one you might want to keep the lights on for.

TECHNICAL NOTE: We've noticed that although the game plays well in 256-color mode, you may not be able to see your dialog options when you're having a conversation. If you raise the number of colors in Windows to 32,000 or 64,000 colors (the hi-color mode), you can more readily read your choices.

HINT

After you have a conversation with the dying creature in the Dark World, you may feel a little lost trying to figure out what to do next. All that's needed to end the demo is to go back into the cave and look at the creature again — you'll see why when you do so.

Maurice Ashley Teaches Chess

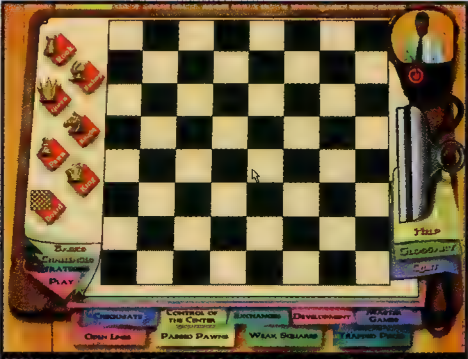
Company: Davidson/Simon & Schuster
Tech Support: (800) 457-8357
Release Date: Available Now
Category: Board Game
Required: 486/33; 8MB RAM; VGA; Windows 3.1 or higher
Install: \CHESS\M2.EXE

Do you lose at chess often? Are you clueless about how to play, but afraid to ask someone to teach you? Well, Maurice Ashley, the "John Madden of chess," has teamed up with Simon & Schuster to help novice and intermediate chess players with *Maurice Ashley Teaches Chess*. In the demo, you'll sample some of the features of a game guaranteed to improve your chess ability. You'll learn a little about how the pieces move and try your hand at some challenging tests designed to make sure you know how to use the pieces effectively.

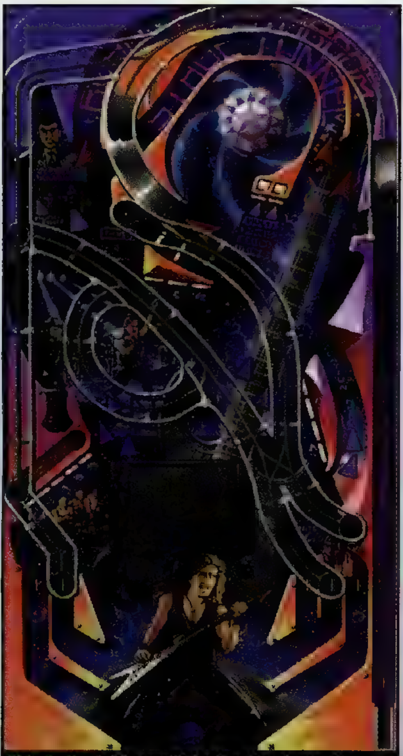
The game runs under Windows, and the voice-over and video effects make playing easy. If you're an advanced player, you may scoff at some of the challenges you face in this demo. But remember, it's geared toward the beginner who wants to pick up the basics of chess. And if you're just learning, remember: even Bobby Fischer had to start somewhere.

JUST FOR FUN

While playing the challenges section, you'll find there are several possible solutions to any one problem. Instead of trying to be efficient, see just how inefficient you can be. Making mistakes is a learning experience, too!



With the help of Maurice Ashley, you can learn the subtleties of playing the intricate game of chess.



This is the table you'll find in the demo. It doesn't look that tough, does it? Guess again...

Extreme Pinball

Company: Epic Megagames
Tech Support: (301) 983-9771
Release Date: Available Now
Category: Pinball Sim
Required: 386/33; 4MB RAM; 7MB hard-drive space; VGA
Install: \EXTREME\INSTALL.EXE

Rock your heart out with Epic Megagames newest pinball game, *Extreme Pinball*.

The full version of *Extreme Pinball* features three tables to challenge you, and in this demo you get to try out the one called Rock Fantasy. It's traditional pinball with a rock and roll theme; bounce the silver ball off the right targets, and you'll be signing record deals and staging that big concert that'll make or break your career.

You shoot the ball with the Down arrow key; the longer you hold it down, the more power you put behind the ball. To control your flippers, just tap the left and right Shift keys. You can even "nudge" the table; just hit the spacebar.

TECHNICAL NOTE: When you install *Extreme Pinball*, the installation program will prompt you for disk 2 and then disk 3. Simply hit any key when you see these messages, and the program will continue on its merry way.

"A new benchmark in graphics and textures...I'm very impressed."

—*Psycho*, Enid, OK
74367,2518@compuserve.com

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Product Information Number 122

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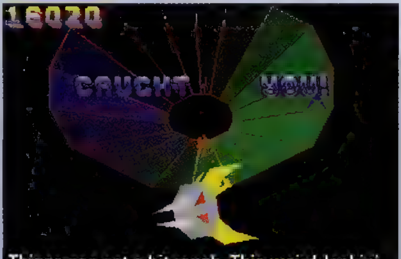
Product Information Number 159

Tempest 2000

Company: Atari
Tech Support: (800) 462-8274
Release Date: Available Now
Category: Arcade
Required: 386/25; 4MB RAM; 1MB hard-drive space; VGA; Mouse
Install: \TEMPEST\SHARE\INSTALL.EXE

Remember those arcade games that used to suck up your quarters? There wasn't anything like blowing away abstract aliens shaped like triangles and boxes when a pack of bubblegum cost 25 cents. Well, Atari is bringing us back to those days with a remake of one of the most popular of the arcade giants — *Tempest 2000*. *Tempest 2000* takes the more familiar game of *Tempest* and adds a few things: particle beams, jumping abilities, and even a 'droid counterpart to help you battle the alien incursion. And, of course, the trusty super-zapper is still available.



Things can get a bit rough. This weird-lookin' head kinda crept up on us.

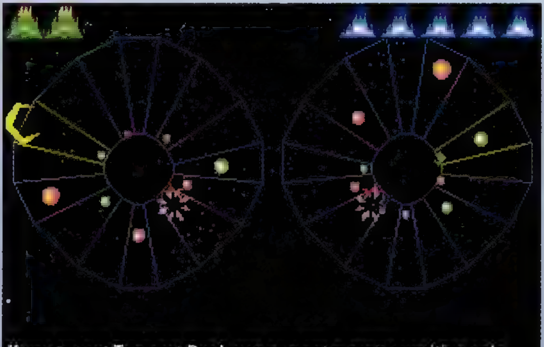
The shareware version of this game gives you a sneak peek at some of the other cool options Atari threw into the works. If there's another *Tempest* fan handy, try out Tempest Plus. For one level, you can battle the aliens with the help of a friend right next to you or connected to you over a modem/serial link — or you can recruit the help of a computer-controlled 'droid. In Tempest Duel, you'll be able to play *against* another player, as you both shoot down aliens while trying to nail the other guy.

You control your shooter with the keyboard or the joystick. On the keyboard, simply use the left and right arrow keys to move your shooter around the screen. The / key fires your weapon; the period key will activate the deadly super-zapper, and the comma key will launch you away from the tunnel for a few seconds, letting you get around those pesky intruders.

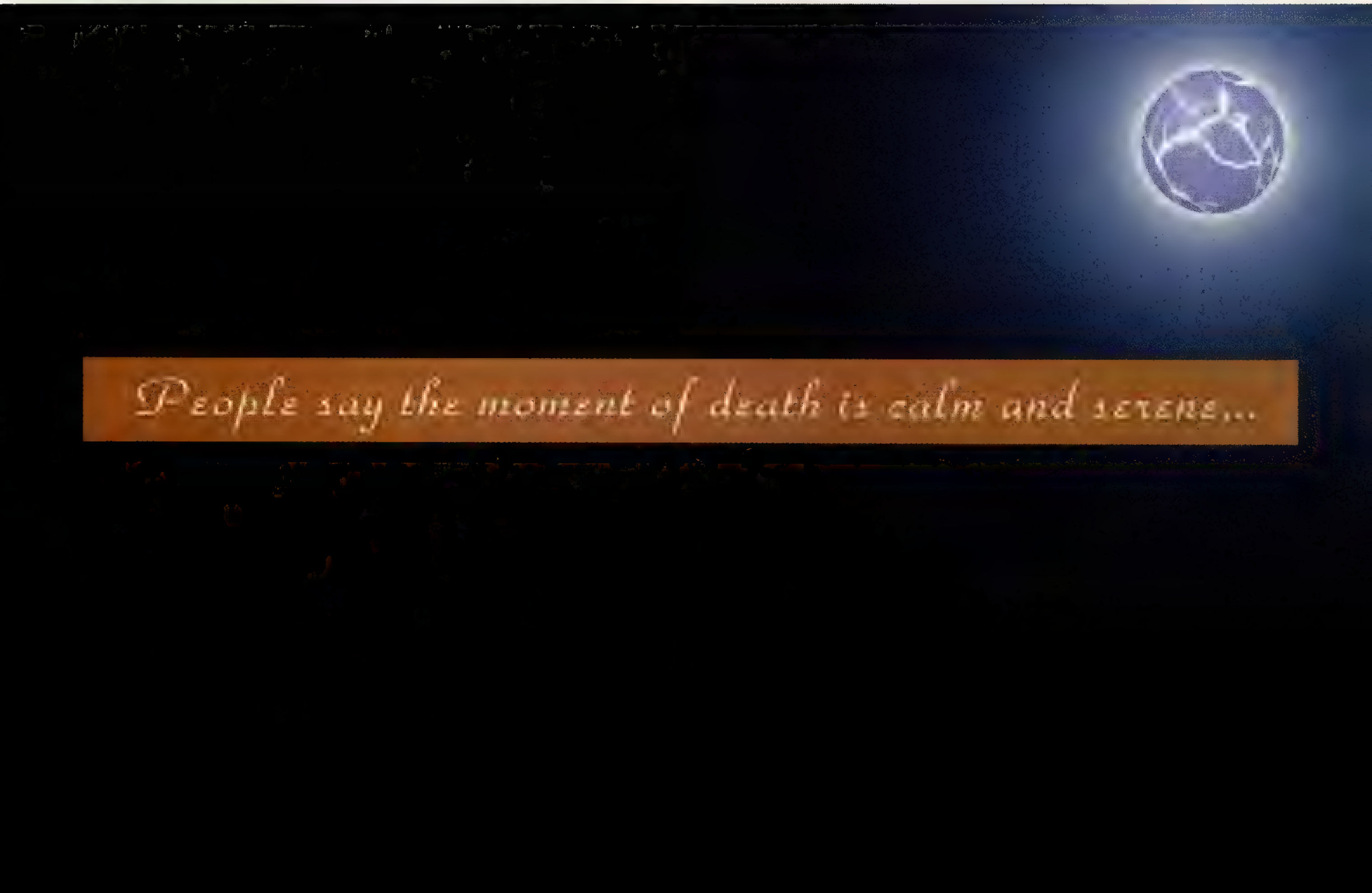
There are several options you can change to speed things up if you have a slow computer, although *Tempest 2000* runs well on modest machines. If you don't like the texture-mapped graphics and are yearning for something closer to *Tempest*'s old-fashioned vector graphics, try turning the textures off in the Options menu.

JUST FOR FUN

In Tempest Duel, you have the option to practice solo. If you work at it, you can get pretty skilled at taking out the advancing aliens while avoiding your own shots bouncing back at you. Just remember that when you hold your fire, you'll have a shield to protect you.



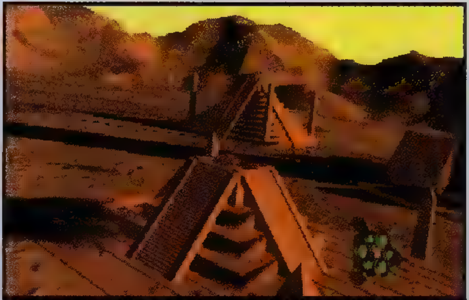
If you try out Tempest Duel, you can get a pretty exciting solo game going by moving around in circles and continuously firing. Eventually, if you're not paying attention, you'll get nailed.


People say the moment of death is calm and serene...

The Hive

Company: Trimark Interactive
Tech Support: (310) 392-3243
Release Date: Available Now
Category: Action
Required: 486DX2/66; 8MB RAM; 1MB hard-drive space; SVGA; Windows 95
Install: \HIVE\THE_HIVE.EXE

Far in the future, strange bee-like creatures, known as hivasects, are created through genetic mutation. It is found, however, that their "honey" is incredibly poisonous to mankind. An evil corporation, led by a man bent on complete domination, is breeding the hivasects to use their product as a weapon against the governments of the universe. Your job as a part of the security council is to stop the madman from completing his goal.


The enemy will be coming in quick from all sides, so keep your eyes peeled.

HINT

Once you man your gun turret, the enemy will fly in hard and fast. If any enemy ships get by you, they'll turn around and come in for another run. If you're not paying attention, you'll end up getting attacked from every direction, and you won't last long in that kind of heat.

The Hive is basically a high-tech shooting gallery, but it's one of the best shooting galleries we've seen. And, unlike other ride-the-rails games that move you along a predetermined path while you blaze away with your mouse, *The Hive* lets you swivel your viewpoint through 360 degrees. In the demo, you man a gun turret and fire at the oncoming enemy; in the full version, you'll do battle from starships, while walking along catwalks, and even while infiltrating the hivasects' hive to do battle against their queen.

When you first run the demo, you'll be presented with a configuration menu. The difficulty levels have been disabled — you can only play at the Normal level. All the other options are still available, though, and the demo is incredibly simple to control — just use a mouse or a joystick to aim and fire at the enemy. (The demo defaults to the joystick if it detects one, so you'll need to unplug your joystick if you'd rather use the mouse.)

The graphics are pretty stunning in this game, especially if you're running it on a powerful computer.

To begin playing, move the cursor around the circular room you start in until you find the screen that is colored in. Click on it, and you'll see a short movie as you get situated in the gun turret. Soon, you'll be blasting away at the enemy. Keep an eye on your life meter (displayed on the right-hand side of the screen); when it runs out, you're dead, but the demo will start over immediately. To stop playing at any time, just hit the Escape key.

Veiled in shadowy darkness, they await your return. Mechanical monstrosities. Shrieking invaders. You thought you had destroyed them. You thought the nightmare was over. You thought wrong.

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OBVIOUSLY THEY NEVER PLAYED

DESCENT™ II

INTERACTIVE DEMO

Descend upon the Interplay web page at http://www.interplay.com or check with your local computer software retailer for the latest release of the Descent II interactive demo. Available for IBM and compatible.

Watch for the full 30-level version coming this March.

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Developed by Parallax Software

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Expect No Mercy

Company: Microforum
Tech Support: (800) 465-2323
Release Date: Available Now
Category: Fighting
Required: 486DX/50; 8MB RAM; 10MB hard-drive space; Windows 3.1 or higher
Install: \NOMERCY\INSTALL.EXE

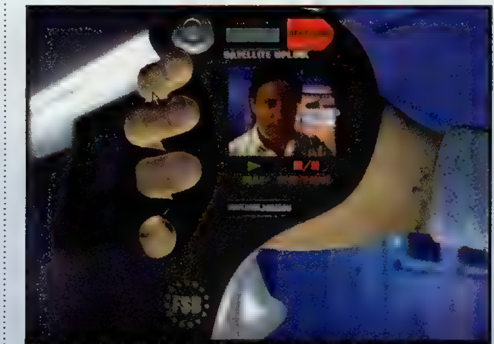
You've never seen a fighting game like this before. Using digitized actors performing real martial arts moves, *Expect No Mercy* is a fighting game that will make you feel the hits as much as you see them as you fight your way to the heart of evil.

The plot is reminiscent of Bruce Lee's *Enter the Dragon*: you play an undercover agent infiltrating a martial arts academy, where it is suspected that the leader of a perverted gang is hand-picking assassins for his own personal army. Your job is to rise through the ranks of fighters, proving your worth, and bring down the unsuspecting gang lord.

The demo lets you fight one opponent — Khan. He's quick and he's mean, so watch out! Take a look at the keyboard commands at the right that you'll need to use to take him out; although you'll probably want to use your gamepad if you've got one. If the demo runs a bit slowly on your machine, try turning off the spurting blood under the options menu (that's also a good idea if you're squeamish). You can also adjust other game elements, such as sound and music.

If you want to play another human opponent, select the Versus mode from the main menu. You can configure which player uses a joystick or keyboard from the options menu.

The digitized video and spectacular special effects make this one unique among fighting games. If you've got a fast enough machine to run it at full speed, it's quite an experience.



Your contact on the outside will keep you informed on what's going on. Personally, we think his accent is phony.

Control Keys

PLAYER ONE		PLAYER TWO	
Punch	Q	Punch	Insert
Kick	A	Kick	Delete
Punch+Kick	Z	Punch+Kick	+
Up	Y	Up	Up Arrow
Down	N	Down	Down Arrow
Away	G	Away	Right Arrow
Toward	J	Toward	Left Arrow
Up/Away	T	Up/Away	Page Up
Up/Toward	U	Up/Toward	Home
Down/Away	R	Down/Away	Page Down
Down/Toward	M	Down/Toward	End

Product Information Number 127

IF YOU'VE GOT THE BALLS, WE'VE GOT THE BALLISTICS.

Battle it out for supremacy in the cyberspace combat zone where one false move may cost you your cojones! Choose from three assault rigs and thirteen fully-upgradable weapon systems as you manuever through maze-like arenas. Careen across jump-ramps, sky-ways and movable blocks in a pulse pounding race against the clock. It's virtual war out there. Time to show 'em how they're hanging.

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Product Information [illegible]

Online Grab Bag

Here's the deal: With your CD-ROM this month, you randomly received a copy of communications software for either the *America Online* (AOL) or the *Global Network Navigator* (GNN) online services. With either program, you'll have access to tons of online information, and the world of the Internet will be yours for the taking. Take a look below for information on how to set up your online service, and the abilities you'll have to scour the 'net. (If you've already tried the online service you received with your magazine, and you'd like to try the other, just call its toll-free number and they'll send you an introductory package.)

Global Network Navigator

Tech Support: (800) 819-6112
Required: 386/33; 8MB RAM; 4MB hard-drive space; VGA; Windows 3.1 or higher; Modem
Install: \GNN\SETUP.EXE

The *Global Network Navigator* is one of the easiest, largest, and most widely used pure Internet services available. With easy to use programs and methods for access the huge amount of information on the 'net, it's an ideal launching pad for explorations into the wilds of the information superhighway. GNNWorks will give you access to thousands of newsgroups, powerful web browsers, internet E-mail, gopher, and file transfer protocol (FTP) sites. If you're looking for a way to get onto the Internet, look no more.

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BEST OF THE NET
Netizens
Cyberspace Surveyor:
DONNA HOFFMAN
TRAVEL
AMSTERDAM THROUGH
JAN MORRIS'S EYES
STORY CAFE
BOOK LOVERS'
SHOPPING LIST
yahoo!
webcrawler
WIC Select
find

The *Global Network Navigator* is your ticket to an easy glide along the avenues of the Internet.

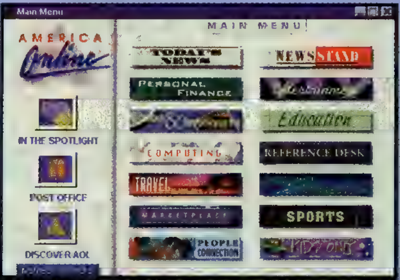
Installing and setting up *GNN* is simple. After running the setup program, you'll need to pull out the slip that was packaged with *The CD* and use the account number and password to register. You'll be online in minutes, with the world at your fingertips. For your first month, you'll be able to spend as many hours as you like exploring what *GNN* has to offer. After that, the rates are a very reasonable $14.95 a month for 20 hours of access time (each additional hour costs $1.95).

Also offered through *GNN* is VocalTech's Internet Phone, which lets you use the Internet to speak with people across the world, without paying long distance bills. For more information on the Internet Phone, check out our story in this issue's Eyewitness section.

America Online

Tech Support: (800) 827-3338
Required: 386/33; 4MB RAM; 4MB hard-drive space; VGA; Windows 3.1 or higher; Modem
Install: \AOL\SETUP.EXE

One of the leaders of online services, *America Online* offers a complete array of utilities for speeding down the Information Superhighway. You'll be able to send E-mail all over the world; participate in live conferences with celebrities and leaders of the scientific community; and get access to a world of files to download, people to chat with, and information to enrich your life, from the latest football scores to stock market reports.



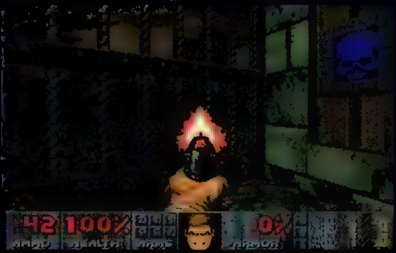
With *America Online* you'll not only have access to the Internet, but a host of features, such as a conference with movie stars, that only *AOL* can give you.

Packaged along with *The CD*, you'll find an account number and password that'll let you try out *AOL*. By simply installing the software and typing in the account number and password, you'll get ten hours and your first month of service free. After that, your rates will be only $9.95 a month, which includes five free hours (each additional hour costs $2.95). Check it out — you'll be amazed at what you can find with a simple click of your mouse.

Add-Ons and Patches

We've got some new gaming pleasures for you this month; along with our usual smorgasbord of new *Doom II*, *Descent*, and *Heretic* add-ons, we've pulled together some of the first *Hexen* WADs to hit the 'net. Also, for you fans of *Warcraft*, we've gathered a couple of modified levels. They take the form of game save files, so to use them you'll just copy them to your *Warcraft* subdirectory and rename them to a file called SAVE#.SAV, where the # is a save-game slot, from 1-9. (Be sure to back up your original saves first.)

Of special note is the *Doom II* WAD called EVILDOG.WAD. Techies who build *Doom* WADs will notice some things in this add-on that are particularly difficult to pull off, such as the gated door at the very beginning, plus some really nifty uses of the teleporter.



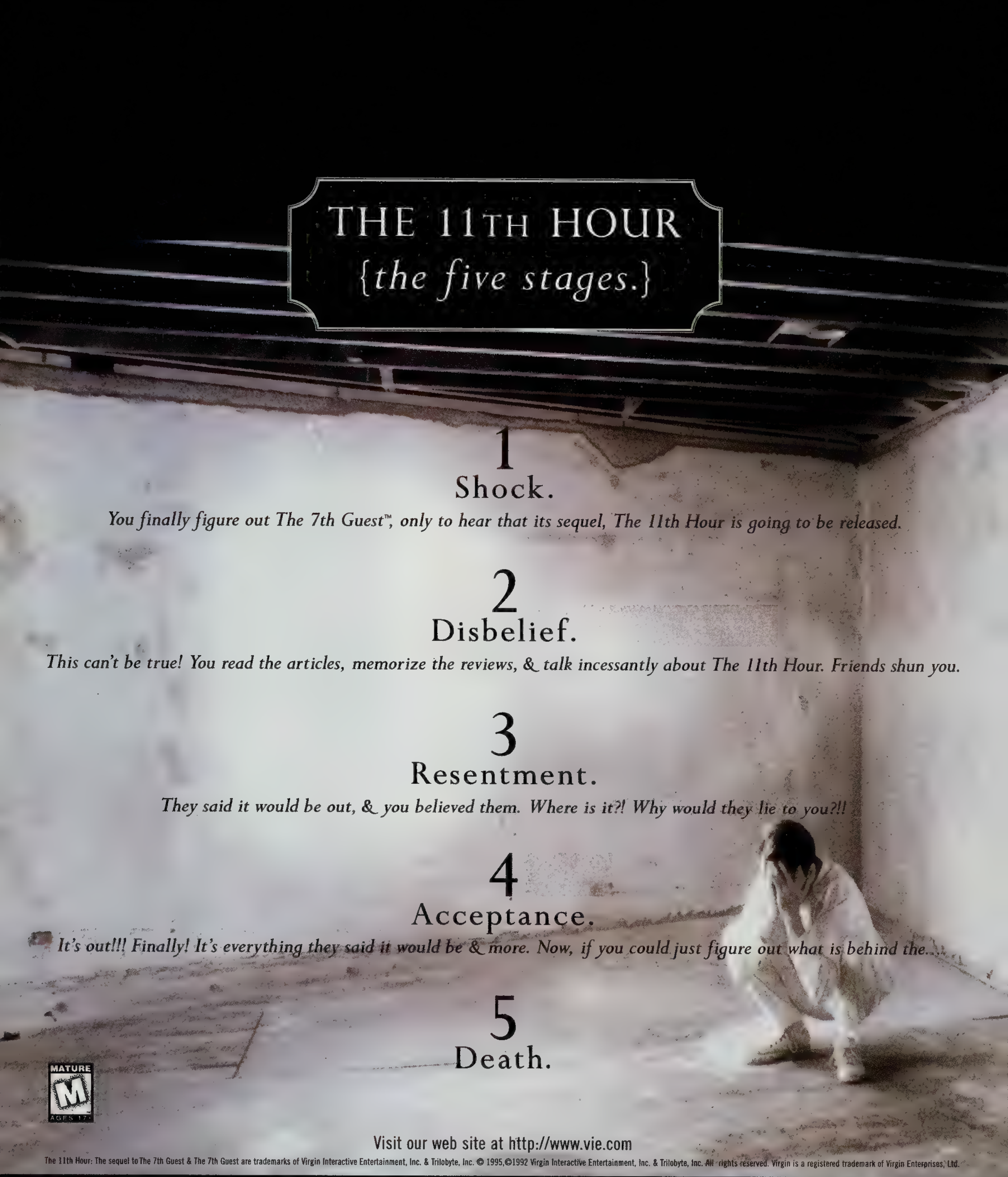
These bars from the EVILDOG *Doom II* add-on are rather special — in *Doom II* there are no doors that will actually let you see *and* shoot through them.

If you're not sure how to use these levels, look at the README.TXT file in the subdirectory for the game you wish to add on to.

We've also got all the patches mentioned in Tom McDonald's Extended Play column. And we've included the Beach Party Bingo scenario Tom created for use with *The Perfect General II* (called PG2BEACH.ZIP). Follow the instructions in the README.TXT file to try it out. All these files can be found in the \PATCHES subdirectory on *The CD*.

If Nothing Works...

We cannot provide technical support for problems you may encounter with the demos on *The CD*. Should your copy fail to run at all, with error messages that indicate your CD-ROM drive cannot read the disc, return it to the following address for replacement: *PC Gamer, The CD #15 Replacement, 1350 Old Bayshore Hwy., Suite 210, Burlingame, CA 94010.* Please include any error messages you receive.



THE 11TH HOUR
{*the five stages.*}

1

Shock.

You finally figure out The 7th Guest™, only to hear that its sequel, The 11th Hour is going to be released.

2

Disbelief.

This can't be true! You read the articles, memorize the reviews, & talk incessantly about The 11th Hour. Friends shun you.

3

Resentment.

They said it would be out, & you believed them. Where is it?! Why would they lie to you?!!

4

Acceptance.

It's out!!! Finally! It's everything they said it would be & more. Now, if you could just figure out what is behind the....

5

Death.

MATURE M AGES 17+

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The 3-D graphics will whiten your hair, not your teeth.

Relax, and let us draw you a nice hot bloodbath.

"Gee Wally, Mrs. Cleaver isn't so nice anymore."

Nineteen puzzles kill precious time, as well as brain cells.

You can stop grieving now. The 11th Hour: The sequel to The 7th Guest™, has finally arrived. This PC CD-ROM game fuses incredible 3-D graphics and mind-numbing challenges with a full-length psychological thriller. It's also 12 times bigger and 2 CDs longer than its predecessor. So, is The 11th Hour really worth the wait? Well, we think it's totally killer.

TRILOBYTE

It's finally arrived.

Product Information Number 181

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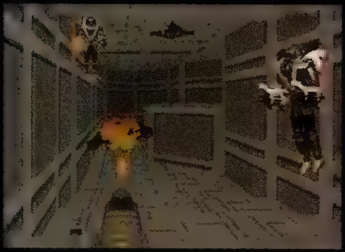
We've Included these Five Next Generation 3D games designed specifically for 3D Blaster.



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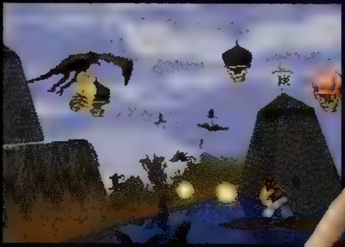
Magic Carpet™ Plus
Fight to restore realms that have been annihilated by catastrophic events. With amazing 3D graphics and arcade-like action, your Magic Carpet, from Bullfrog, awaits you.



Flight Unlimited
This incredible flight simulator from Looking Glass Technologies, Inc. features 3D, texture mapped scenery and flying motion so real you'll want to fasten your seat belt for takeoff.

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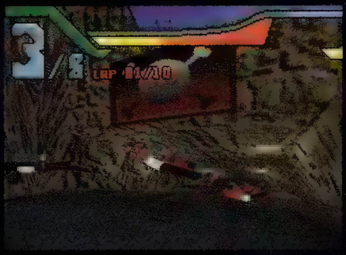

NASCAR® Racing

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3.1 and DOS systems. And it's Plug n Play compatible.

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EXCLUSIVE! BEHIND-THE-SCENES OF THE HOTTEST GAMES

Spycraft: The Great

Espionage — from guys who know what they're talking about!

The Cold War is over, but the New World Order is just as dangerous. *Spycraft* plunges you into a realm of bio-war terrorism and ultra-high-tech intelligence action.

—William R. Trotter

F.Y.I.

FOR YOUR INFORMATION

Game: Spycraft: The Great Game
Developer: Activision
Publisher: Activision, Inc., 11601 Wilshire Blvd., Suite 300, Los Angeles, CA, 90025 (310) 473-9200
Projected price: TBA
Percentage complete: 90%

In a nutshell

Spycraft is the first espionage adventure based on contemporary, post-Cold-War reality. It marks a dramatic break from the James-Bond-style shoot-em-ups.

What's so special?

It brings together the expertise of Major General Oleg Kalugin, former chief of the KGB, William Colby, former head of the CIA, and author James Adams, one of the most respected and experienced writers on the subject of international terrorism and intelligence activities. Talk about a power team!

Why should I care?

Most previous spy-vs-spy games have been either puerile Bondian comic-book fantasies or tedious exercises in boredom. This game immerses the player in the gritty, treacherous reality of modern espionage.

And when's it coming out?

February 1996

Although face-to-face violence is comparatively rare in real-world operations, it is always a possibility, and a good agent is always prepared.

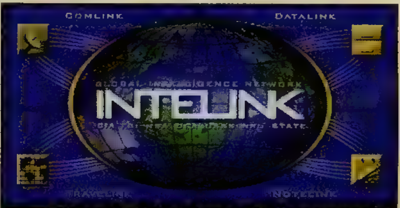
From the end of World War Two to the incredible weeks when the Soviet Union imploded from its own internal contradictions and inefficiencies, the world of the intelligence operative was one of curious stability. To be sure, governments were overthrown here and there, assassinations were carried out, treason committed, and numerous acts of betrayal and skullduggery were plotted, but there developed a bizarre comraderie between the KGB and the CIA.

Many of the operatives knew each other, certain odd rules of decorum were observed, and everybody followed basic ground rules. The respective intelligence agencies carried out their multifarious activities — however nasty, underhanded, and occasionally violent — within certain known and respected limits. Both sides in the Cold War did their best to gain advantage and damage one another, but both observed an unspoken principle, derived from the shared horror of peering into the nuclear abyss, of not going *too far.*

But when the Berlin Wall crumbled and the barricades went up in Red Square, those Cold War conventions were shattered forever. Instead of two enormously powerful adversaries waging a gigantic but basically stable chess game, the world suddenly became a more chaotic, unpredictable, and dangerous place than it had ever been.

The fragmentation of the Soviet Union spawned violent ethnic strife, terrorists of every stripe suddenly had access to nuclear technology, Third World dictatorships began developing biological warfare programs of apocalyptic potential, and the international drug trade — frequently allied to powerful organized crime syndicates — amassed such staggering wealth that it could buy and sell governments almost at will.

This array of new and deadly challenges profoundly changed the nature of intelligence operations. And at some point, Activision concluded that the time was ripe for a roleplaying adventure based on these new realities — one that left behind the comforting but utterly outdated Aston-Martin car chases of the James Bond era and gave the gameplayer an exciting and chal-



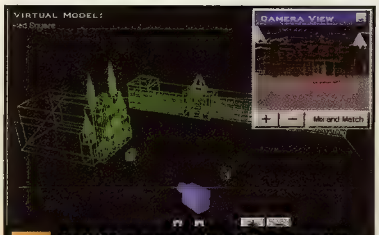
Since the CIA vehemently disapproves of people hacking into its data-net, Activision designed a world-wide information network that mirrors the real thing.

Real-life locations were used as background whenever possible. This is the real CIA headquarters in Langley, VA, and this is as good a look at it as most of us will ever get.

Game

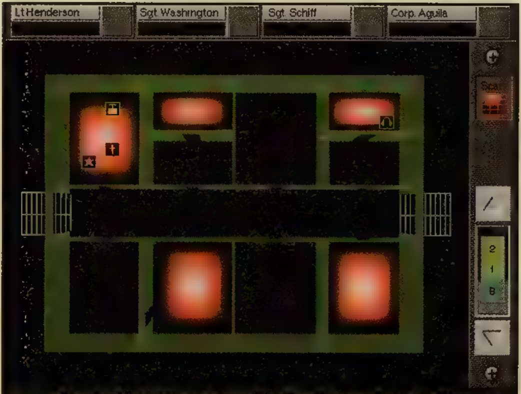
Win95

TOP SECRET



Activision spent a lot of time creating architectural renderings of Red Square.

A tense moment in Russian history, spectacularly transforming 150 extras, thanks to the wonders of digital technology, into a "cast of thousands" assembled in Red Square to hear the new president.



Spycraft challenges you to direct complex intelligence operations in hostile locales.

lenging taste of today's high-stakes, ultra-high-tech world of international intrigue.

Activision's highest priority was authenticity, and to that end they assembled an incredible project team. To produce *Spycraft*, they engaged Andrew Goldman, an avid and highly knowledgeable fan of espionage literature, who holds a degree in Political Science and keeps tabs on every new development in the intelligence field.

And *then*, in what amounted to an incredible coup, they persuaded two of the most powerful intelligence officers of the Cold War era — CIA chief William Casey and KGB chief Oleg Kalugin — not only to serve as technical advisors for the game, but to portray themselves in the story! That, fellow gamers, is "authenticity" of the highest order.

To wrap up the whole concept in a first-class script, Activision enlisted author James Adams, Washington bureau chief of the *Sunday Times of London* and author of the current best-seller *Aldritch Ames and the Corruption of the CIA*. Among Adams' other credits is the definitive account of the mysterious assassination of Gerald Bull, the eccentric and slightly sinister genius who invented the ominous Iraqi "Supergun," *Secret Armies* (an equally definitive account of the American, Soviet and European Special Forces), three highly-regarded novels, and other books on international terrorism and covert operations.

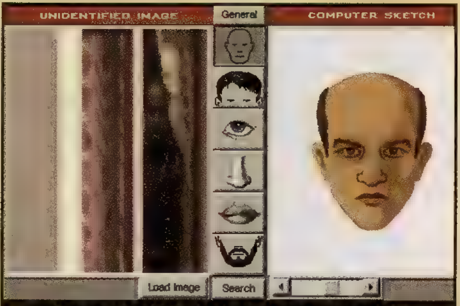
As for the game itself, the player assumes the role of a rookie CIA operative and must first undergo true-to-life training at the Agency's legendary training facility, "The Farm." He or she must learn to master numerous sophisticated tools and techniques before being sent into the field.

Out there in the real world, the operative becomes involved in a complex series of interlocking adventures revolved around an upcoming Russian presidential election. The action is driven by player decisions and choices, and covers every aspect of contemporary intelligence activity. You may be called upon to lead a S.E.A.L. team into hostile territory, investigate suspicious financial transactions by a fellow Agency employee, rescue a missing operative. or engage in nitty-gritty police-work, such as tracking bullet-trajectories.

"Once the player actively enters the game," said Producer Goldman, "he will face situations, issues, and moral dilemmas that closely mirror those which confront a real field operative." There's a fascinating moral dimension to *Spycraft*, in that yesterday's enemies are today's collaborators, and the line between friend and foe is often murky, defined by situational context rather than the old Black-Hats vs. White-Hats verities. Do you sacrifice the life of a friend in order to, possibly, save the country you serve?

Concern for authenticity extends to the settings and "look" of the game (the graphics are a remarkable blend of 35mm. film, digitized video, still photos, and actual CIA stock footage). Several critical scenes take place in Moscow's Red Square, and to recreate the setting accurately, the design team needed aerial photos.

Well, times have changed, but not *that* much: aerial photos of central Moscow are still a security no-no, so Activision's team spent hundreds of man-hours developing their own architectural renderings, based on still photos, news footage, and eyewitness descriptions.



Even with all the high-tech resources of the computer age, good intelligence work requires the careful piecing-together of details — *Spycraft* is richly filled with puzzles, clues, and elusive linkages.

The days of the lone-wolf spy are over; today's intelligence-gathering activities are team efforts.

Using that data and footage of 150 Hollywood extras waving flags and cheering, along with advanced digital image-compositing and matte painting techniques, Activision came up with an astonishingly convincing sequence showing the Russian President addressing a crowd of 200,000 in the middle of Red Square. PC magic, indeed.

Not surprisingly, the CIA also does not permit on-site filming of the facilities at its Langley, Virginia, headquarters, but with ex-director Colby's help, more than 40 very authentic-looking locations — offices, laboratories, image-analysis rooms, etc. — were constructed on a Hollywood lot.

And what would a spy drama be without exotic foreign locales? *Spycraft* takes you not only to Moscow, but to London, Tunis, Heidelberg, and several other Bondian destinations.

Ever since the Tsarist and British empires plotted and counter-plotted against each other in Central Asia in the 19th Century, the concept of "The Great Game" has exerted an irresistible lure for armchair adventurers.

Now that deadly, cat-and-mouse fascination will be available for desktop adventurers, as well, in what promises to be the most ambitious and riveting PC game of its genre ever produced. **PCG**

INSIGHTS FROM THE AUTHOR:

EXCERPTS FROM AN INTERVIEW WITH JAMES ADAMS

PCG: Given your extraordinary credentials as an author and journalist, what is it that attracted you to this new genre of interactive computer narrative?

ADAMS: Well, you know as a writer that writing a book is an intensive process, and you generate this opus and it lands with a thud in the bookstores. If one writes 100,000 words, it actually isn't the most lucrative thing that one can do — one does it for elusive personal reasons. I've always felt that if you're going to write a book, you should strive to reach the widest possible audience: doing a book, doing a book on tape, selling the movie rights, doing the screenplay, and so on. Now, part of that becomes doing a CD-ROM.

Then there's the psychological reason. As you know, writing is a lonely business — you produce the book after months of work, gazzilion cups of coffee, beating the dog, shouting at the wife and endless angst. And you have to go back and forth with editors, which is a dreary and depressing process.

Doing the CD-ROM was a totally different experience: you work with people who have tremendous enthusiasm, who're at the cutting edge of technology, always pushing out into the unknown. And they value knowledge, input and creativity in a way that book publishers no longer do. So it was tremendously exciting, because you'd come up with ideas and there would be exciting, sparky, interesting creative discussions. I really, really enjoyed myself in a way I haven't in writing umpteen books.

And then there's the technology — eventually there'll come a time when the CD-ROM market drives the book market, rather than the other way around. To get in on that market now, was a real opportunity for me, and one I embraced with real enthusiasm.

PCG: Was it a bizarre experience working with both Kalugin and Colby at the same time?

ADAMS: Oh, indeed! There was this wonderful moment when we were deep into the script, and we were in Colby's Georgetown home. Symbolically enough, Kalugin was sitting on my left, Colby on my right. We were going through the dialogue and Kalugin would say (adopts as Boris-and-Natsahia accent): "Well, Bill, I don't think we would have said that in quite that way, do you?" And Colby would respond (adopts an American accent): "No, Oleg, I think we would have said it more like this..." It was a fantastically surreal conversation.

Author James Adams worked closely with former KGB chief Oleg Kalugin (left) and former CIA head William Colby (right).

PCG: It's ironic that, back when the Soviet Union as we'd always known it simply fell apart, people were saying: Well, what are the intelligence people going to do now? Their practically out of a job. And yet, the new situation is vastly more dangerous than the old.

ADAMS: Yes, you have entirely new kinds of operatives dealing with a very complex and dangerous situation. In the old days, there was a kind of predictability. But no longer. Last year, there was $400 billion of illegal drug money laundered through the United States, and the entire CIA budget is only three billion.

The game recreates this to a fantastic degree. The designers have created this inter-service communications system between all the various intelligence agencies that must be a very accurate replica of the real thing. Obviously, we couldn't tap into the real systems at Langley, but we've come up with something that seems very authentic. This will set a new standard for realism.

PCG: I understand that the game is filled with very ambiguous moral decisions.

ADAMS: Yes. In the field, you do have tough choices to make. The very idea of "loyalty" is very murky. You can't really be loyal to a *system* anymore, because the whole argument about Communism versus Democracy is out the window. Are you loyal to your country? Well, what exactly does "your county" mean these days? If you're loyal to a corporation that's a major contributor to your country's gross national product, how loyal should you be? In the Cold War period, the lines between loyalty and disloyalty, courage and cowardice, were fairly absolute. But that's no longer the case, so a field operative has to make some damned difficult decisions. What are your principles and how do you stand by them?

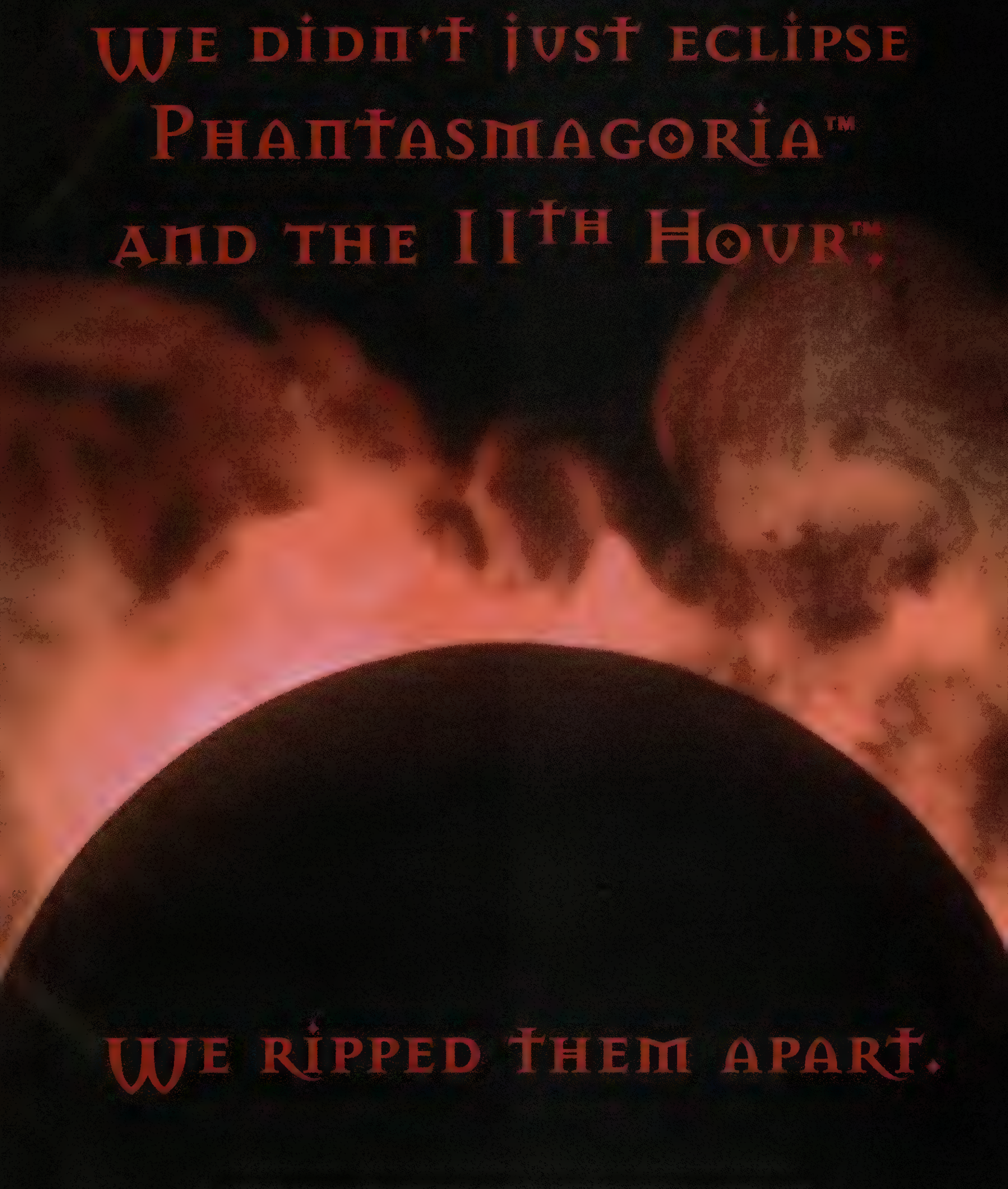
PCG: How you do view the right-wing movement in the United States. I've interviewed some of these people and they frankly scare the hell out of me. How to you respond to someone who seriously believes that there are 100,000 Chinese troops hidden in Canada, ready to invade the country? Do you see the militia movements as just a temporary nuisance, or a major threat?

ADAMS: If you look at the history of revolutionary or terrorist movements, you'll find that all such organizations have at their root some kind of genuine justification. The right-wing movements are driven by *alienation*. They see themselves as victims of an oppressive government that's interfering with their lives. Well, if you were asked the question: Does the government put undue burdens on your daily existence, you'd probably say "yes". So it's a matter of degree — to deal with this phenomenon, you have to seriously address the root causes of its discontent, which are very real indeed.

PCG: What do you perceive as the greatest terrorist threat today? The proliferation of nuclear technology?

ADAMS: No, because nuclear components are well monitored, hard to transport, and rather easy to track. What scares the hell out of me is the biological threat. A car bomb that kills a few people in Saudi Arabia is just routine stuff — it's headlines for a week, then it's forgotten.

But if you have a canister of a virulent biological agent — which is *much* harder to detect — and you release it upwind of Atlanta and it kills 50,000 people, then you've made a real Statement. That's the kind of threat we must deal with today, and it's a fearsome one indeed. To protect us from such a horror, we need intelligence agents of the highest professionalism and dedication, and that's what I hope the game will reflect.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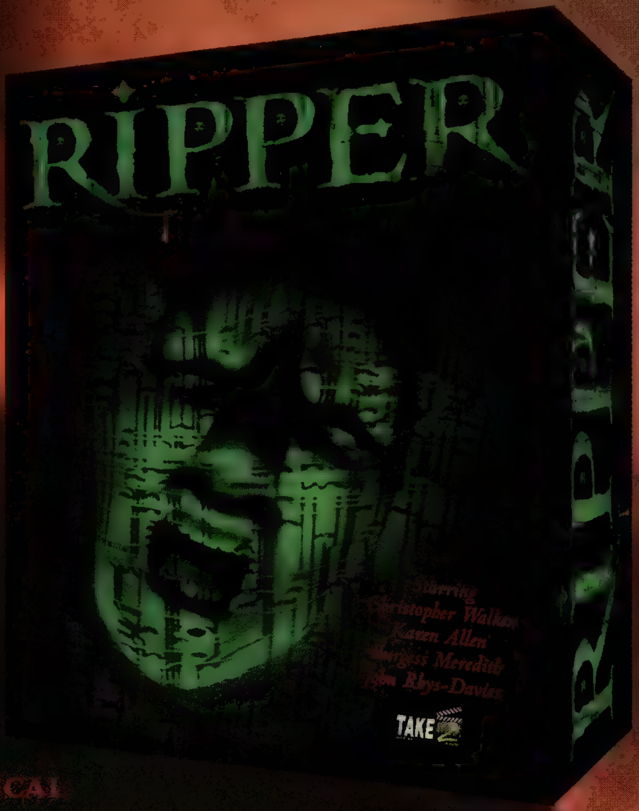
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Product Information Number 167

Syndicate II

It's murder and intimidation on a global scale, Bullfrog-style!

Get ready for another round of bloody, innovative fun. The follow-up to the strategy/shoot-'em-up, *Syndicate*, brings intense action and stylish graphics to the PC.

—Todd Vaughn

F.Y.I.
FOR YOUR INFORMATION

Game: Syndicate II: Corporate Uprising
Designer: Bullfrog
Publisher: Electronic Arts, 1450 Fashion Island Blvd., San Mateo, CA 94404-2064 (415) 571-7171
Projected Price: $59.95
Percentage Complete 75%

In a nutshell

As the sequel to Bullfrog's *Syndicate*, *Syndicate II* puts you in command of ruthless cybernetic agents as you attempt to maintain control of the world.

What's so special?

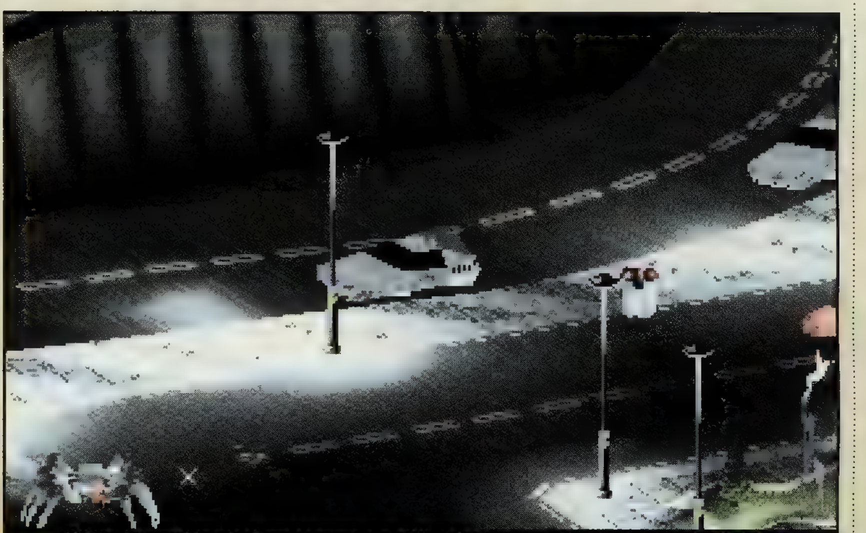
This is more than a rehash of an old game. Built from the ground up using an entirely new graphics engine, *Syndicate II* will offer players the chance to view the action from any angle, play as either side, and challenge friends (or enemies) with multi-player options.

Why should I care?

With its highly stylized backdrops and demanding, action-oriented gameplay, *Syndicate II* should be a decidedly different game from what you're used to, blending strategy, real-time action and multi-player fun in a unique package.

And when's it coming out?

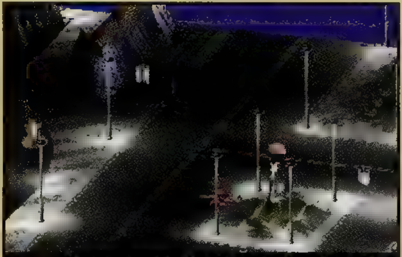
April 1996



While the graphics in these screens are still under construction, the impressive lighting effects and texture-mapping are readily noticeable.

Bullfrog released the original *Syndicate* for the PC nearly two years ago, but it still ranks as one of the most unusual and inventive games we've seen in quite a long time. Not only was it a superb action game providing plenty of shoot-'em-up fun, it brought elements of research and strategic planning together in one brutal and entertaining package.

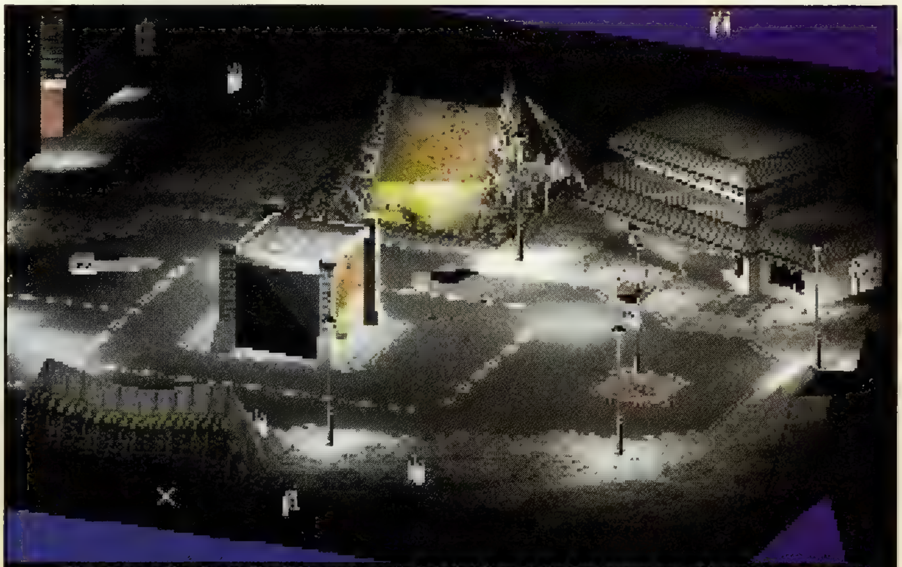
Looking back, it's easy to see that *Syndicate* was more than just a really fun game, but a brand new way to look at games in general. Instead of the usual, you-are-the-good-guy stance portrayed in 99% of the products out at the time, Bullfrog and Co. decided to take a welcome detour down the road less traveled to create this classic. Set in a future world where corporations have evolved (or devolved, if you prefer) into a belligerent mixture of tyrannical governments and armed security forces, *Syndicate* cast the player as head of a fledgling corporation out to control the world.



As your agents begin to explore the city, you'll have full freedom to blast anyone who gets in your way. The real-time lighting effects provide plenty of eye-popping visuals.

The rules of doing business in *Syndicate* were pared down to just one deadly ideal: destroy the opposition and take their holdings by any means necessary. To this end, you controlled four cybernetically enhanced humans outfitted with an ever-increasing amount of high-tech firepower and attempted to kill off rival squads of agents and add their territories to yours. Not only were you encouraged to blow the hell out of everything (rival agents, civilians, police officers — just to name a few), it was a necessary element of winning the game.

Now Bullfrog is putting the final touches on the sequel, *Syndicate II: Corporate Uprising*, and it's obvious we can expect more of the same unexpected



The cities in *Syndicate II* will be much more detailed than in the first game; not only will there be new vehicles and civilians roaming about, but now you can lay waste to even the largest buildings.

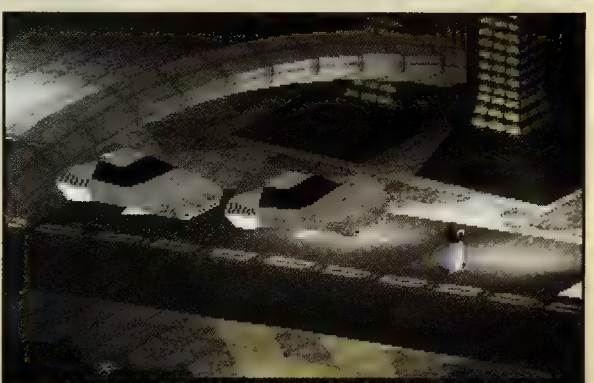
treats this time around.

The story that unfolds in *Corporate Uprising* takes place shortly after the end of *Syndicate* and its add-on disk, *American Revolt.* After successfully defeating all of your rivals, you find yourself the head of the biggest syndicate yet and in complete control of the world's resources. But since power is fleeting, your ability to maintain order throughout your territories is starting to fade. Radical biker gangs and terrorists are beginning to be a thorn in your side, creating upheaval in some of your major territories. As if that weren't enough, rival syndicates, seeing opportunity in your troubles, are beginning to strike at the heart of your financial centers.

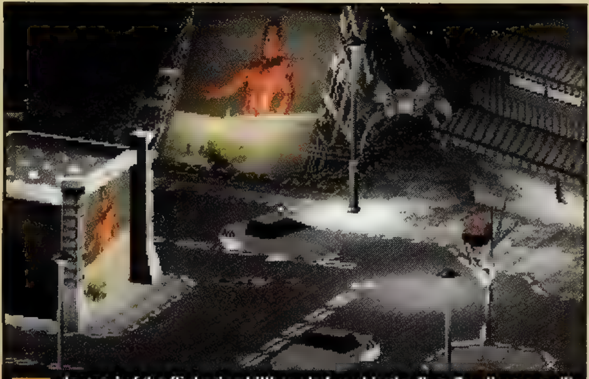
As you progress through the game, not only will you lose your place of power and have to fight tooth-and-nail to win it back, but you'll have to reclaim lost technology and funding you'll desperately need to survive.

This reversal of fortune gives *Syndicate II* a lot more narrative punch than the original, giving the player a taste of success — as well as some of the more impressive technologies that would otherwise only be available later in the game — before stripping it all away. Throughout the game's missions (there will be around 50, but an exact number hasn't been determined) you'll need to capture enemy agents, scientists, and technologies before you can rebuild your empire and exact some revenge.

As in *Syndicate*, you'll control your four team members using a series of simple point-and-click commands, and here's where the game's sometimes subtle strategies come into play. Since each member can be controlled individually, do you divide your team and spread them throughout the city? Or do you concentrate your firepower in hopes of beating overwhelming odds? There's no single right answer, of course, and that's all part of the challenge and charm of *Syndicate II.*



In case you weren't happy with the fixed three-quarter perspective of *Syndicate, Syndicate II* lets you choose the perfect "view to a kill," with features that allow you to zoom in and out of the action or manipulate the angle of the screen.



Instead of the flickering billboards found in the first *Syndicate*, you'll now be able to watch real-time movies on these big screens.

The basic structure of *Syndicate II* won't differ much from the original, but it will have an entirely new graphics engine with impressive features like real-time lighting effects and variable "camera" angles that let you choose the best view of your agents or get a broad overview of the city. You'll be able zoom in to focus the action on just one of your operatives and tilt the view to near eye-level, or zoom out to direct all of your agents to different corners of the map.

The most impressive feature, though, is how the reactive the game world has become; buildings can now be blown up in massive explosions, spreading debris throughout the city. And if you're a closet pyromaniac, you'll be happy to know there's very little you *can't* set on fire.

Some of the weapons you'll use in creating all this wanton destruction are the ever-popular Flamer (a flamethrower, perfect for setting fire to large groups of people), the Minigun (a heavy assault weapon with a very long range and unmatched stopping power), and a new weapon simply known as the Nuke (an explosive device with enough power to bring down several buildings).

But in order to have those weapons at your disposal, you'll need to research new technologies. As your funding and technology is stripped away, it becomes more important to capture enemy weaponry, scientists, and technology just to maintain the status quo.

The demanding missions and graphic eye-candy would seem to be enough for just about any gamer, but Bullfrog is going the extra mile to ensure that *Corporate Uprising* will also support multiple players over local area networks or modem. Up to eight players can direct their agents in an all-out battle for supremacy, using ready-made scenarios designed specifically for multiple players. While I didn't have the chance to try out any of these features, if the single player mode is any indication, this could be the most addictive multi-player game since Virgin's *Command & Conquer*.

Even though the game is still a few months away from release (it's about 75 percent complete, with some fairly rough graphics in place), *Syndicate II: Corporate Uprising* looks like it has all the right ingredients to become one of the year's strongest action titles.

PCG

Destiny

Win95

The history of the world, take two!

It take's a mighty ambitious game to go head-to-head with one of the best-selling mega-hits of all time, but *Destiny* might just have what it takes.

— *William R. Trotter*

F.Y.I.
FOR YOUR INFORMATION

Game: Destiny
Developer: Dagger Interactive Technologies, Inc.
Publisher: Interactive Magic, P.O. Box 13491, Research Triangle Park, North Carolina, 27709 (919) 461-0722
Projected price: TBA
Percentage complete: 60%

In a nutshell:

Build your empire from the Stone Age to the dawn of the Space Age, in competition with as many as eight other players. One of the biggest and most ambitious games ever designed *primarily* for network play.

What's so special?

The emphasis in *Destiny* is on social, diplomatic, and technological interaction, rather than on conquest. It features perhaps the most advanced "chat mode" element yet devised, giving it a very personalized quality.

Why should I care?

Game-sessions tend to evolve into "virtual living room" affairs, so that players can enjoy the socializing, back-and-forth quality of a classic pen-and-paper get-together — an element that's often missing when you play against the computer alone.

And when's it coming out?

First quarter 1996.

The era of the Stone Age man is the starting point for the campaign game.

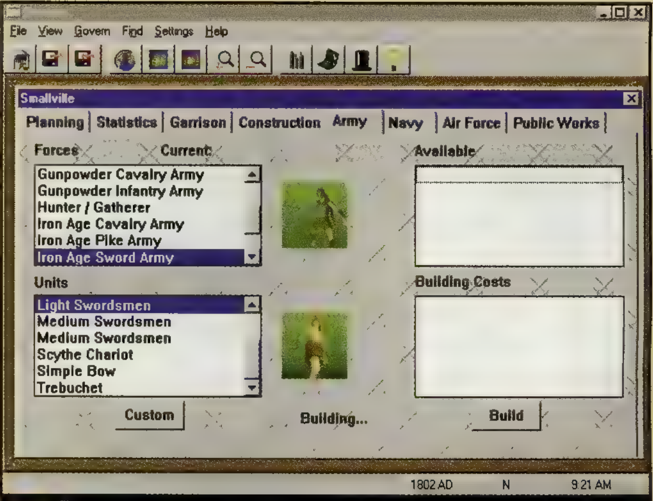
Ask any veteran game player for his list of the top five games of all time, and chances are Sid Meier's *Civilization* will be at or near the top of the list. Ever since the original version debuted in 1991, Meier's epic meditation on human history has enthralled tens of thousands. Its elegant combination of sweeping drama and intricate detail, its addictive replay value, its sheer dynamism, all made it tower head and shoulders above the mass of mediocre strategy games from which it emerged.

Nobody is a bigger fan of *Civilization* than Dagger Interactive's veteran game-designer Adrian Earle, and when Interactive Magic's founder, "Wild Bill" Stealey, approached him with the idea of creating a *Civilization*-style game, he was somewhat taken aback.

But Earle loves a challenge, and Stealey's proposition offered him the biggest challenge of his career. To start the process rolling, he polled dozens of friends and colleagues, asking them what they liked about *Civ* and what they might like to see in a different game, based on the same premise. He was deluged with feedback, and by the time he had digested all those suggestions and filtered them through his own concepts and perceptions, a clear vision of the new game began to emerge:

- It was to be a Windows 95 game; no DOS option
- It would feature state-of-the-art graphics
- It would be in 3D and Real Time, so that players could actually walk the terrain and sail the seas
- It would be accompanied by a soundtrack of such high musical quality that game players could, and hopefully would, play the music track of the CD on its own
- It would be dedicated primarily to multi-player gaming, via network and modem (although the AI would be sufficiently adroit to provide a good solo-play-against-the-computer experience as well)

Once these goals had been set, work began on the actual game design. *Destiny* is an epic-scale strategy game that traces the development from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Iron Age Cavalry Army
Iron Age Pike Army
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Scythe Chariot
Simple Bow
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The game sports a clean interface: Windows, yes, but with a traditional "game" feel. Here's where you invest in armies and their development.

This early rendering of one of the ships from the advanced stages of the game displays the game's sumptious graphics.

mankind from lowly Stone Age tribes to the end of the Twentieth Century — i.e., the dawn of the Space Age.

Players assume the role of the political/religious leaders of their tribe, and must make all the decisions affecting the well-being and progress of the tribe. In effect, you evolve from a hunter-gatherer who dominates by having the biggest stone axe in town to become the president (or dictator, or High Priest) of a large, complex, modern state.

There are two basic modes of play, each very different in its ramifications: Scientific or Military. In the former mode, the objective is to achieve the technological break-throughs that place your nation in a position of dominance by the game's end; in the Military mode, the game ends with one tribe obliterating all the others.

Of course, conflicts will arise periodically even in the Scientific Mode, and when warfare breaks out, the game player has the option to let the computer decide the outcome or to go into a tactical mode and fight it out in typical wargame style. The battle sequences, to judge from the glimpses I saw, are designed to be like those in *Caesar II*: relatively short but quite satisfying in their own right.

Although most players, I suspect, will opt for the humongous "campaign" game, *Destiny* also comes preloaded with shorter scenarios covering a single historical epoch: Iron Age, Bronze Age, Age of Gunpowder, etc. These would seem ideal for groups of players who have only a single evening's worth of free time.

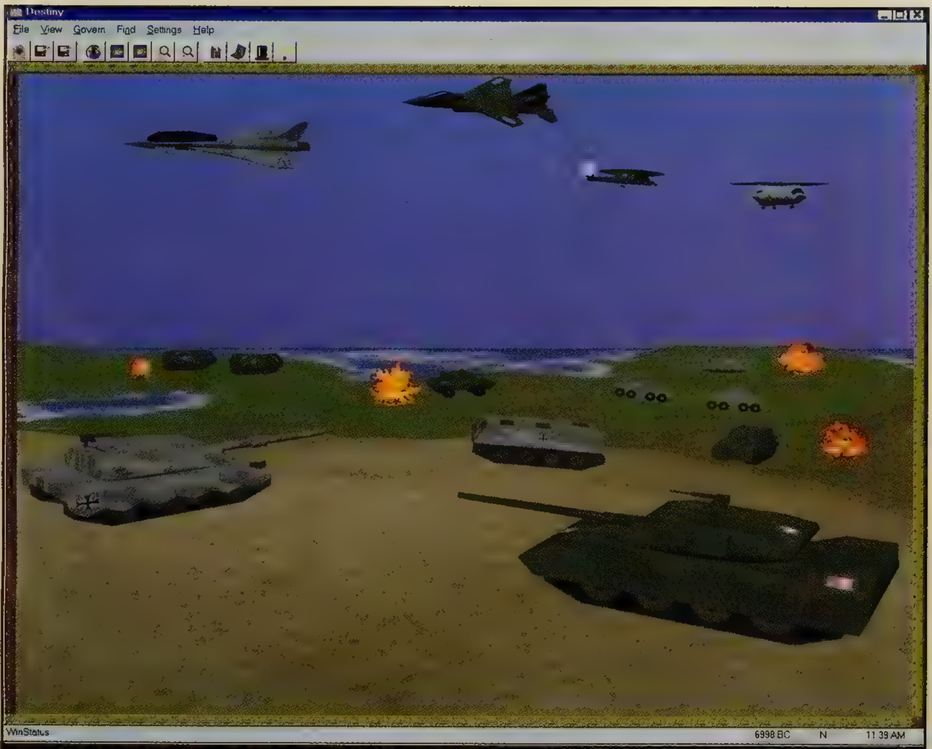
Although the game is exclusively designed for the Windows 95 platform, Earle wanted the players to feel immersed in a "game" environment, rather than a "work" environment. To that end, he created an interface using dockable tool bars, windows-style icon and bar layouts, and a whole range of interesting and "tribal"-based wallpapers and borders for the Windows desktop.

"There have been all too many 'multimedia' hyped products," Adrian remarked during my recent visit to Interactive Magic's North Carolina headquarters. "Personally, I'm still not convinced that digitized speech and full-motion video with live actors have yet provided any significant improvement to most games. There are, however, two areas where the CD has great potential: data information/retrieval and audio."

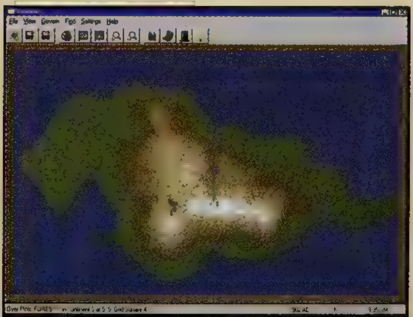
So *Destiny* comes with a very impressive 100,000-word online encyclopedia that *also* functions as a help system. If, for instance, you're debating whether or not to devote research points toward the invention of the "shaduf" (those counterweighted water-drawing gizmos you see in every movie that involves travel on the Nile river), you can access "shaduf" in the encyclopedia and learn not only when it was invented and how it works, but what practical effect it had on agricultural development in a desert environment.

In choosing to build the game primarily for multi-player enjoyment, the designers have added a new and richly layered element to the aspects of diplomacy and trade. Due to the inherent limitations of AI, these exchanges are usually conducted on a fairly dumb level.

But with real players convers-



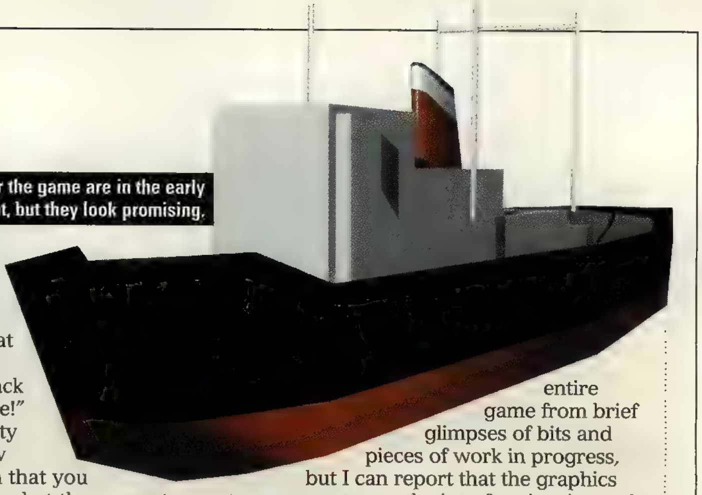
These are early renderings of some of the armor and aircraft you'll need to deploy in the later stages of the game. Gamers will have the option to let the computer decide the outcome of the battle.



The game randomly generates the eight continents for gameplay.

ing in the game's Chat Mode, the possibilities really explode. You can wheel and deal, shop around for the best offers, gang up on other players, cut secret deals and form shifting alliances, and play verbal poker to your heart's content. This added dimension of realism in the realms of diplomacy and trade also serves to relegate military action into its classic, Klauswitzian, role: war as an extension of diplomacy.

"Spy networks" will also be available, on those occasions when "open diplomacy" may not serve your objectives. "If you've ever played the board game *Diplomacy*," Earle said, with a wicked gleam in his eye, "you know the sort of thing that can be done with a quick stab in the back at just the right time!"



Rendered graphics for the game are in the early stages of development, but they look promising.

Trading activity also takes on a new sense of realism, in that you won't be limited to what the computer thinks it needs. Players can decide exactly what they consider is the value of each resource, and can set up fairly elaborate brokerage deals between several opponents.

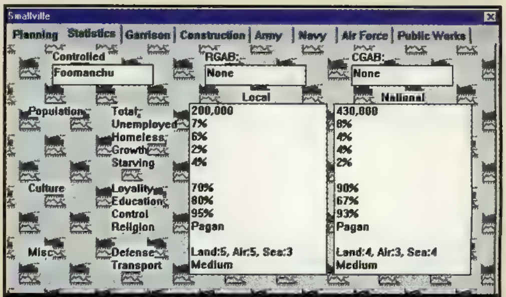
Access to 3D information is granted based on the level of difficulty chosen by the player. For example, at the hardest level, access to the top-down maps and directional compass window will not be granted until your tribe has actually discovered both surveying and the compass. This limits the player, in the early stages of the game, to seeing only what his forces see as they move around.

"It's surprising how difficult long-range planning becomes when your view of the world is limited to the next range of mountains or the distance your ships can safely sail away from land. On the other hand, if the game is set on its easy level, you can view the entire globe in 3D and visually explore areas without actually sending members there," said Earle.

It's always dicey for a writer to extrapolate on the quality of an entire game from brief glimpses of bits and pieces of work in progress, but I can report that the graphics are sumptuous, the interface is crisp and easy to understand, the technological "tree" is both exhaustive and full of exotic possibilities, and the game looks like it's going to be enormous fun to play.

Can *Destiny* dethrone *Civilization*? I'm not sure that's really the point (since everyone I talked to on the production team has the deepest respect for that classic). But it certainly will offer *Civ* fans a new, different, stimulating take on the same basic themes, and it may well emerge as a classic in its own right.

PCG

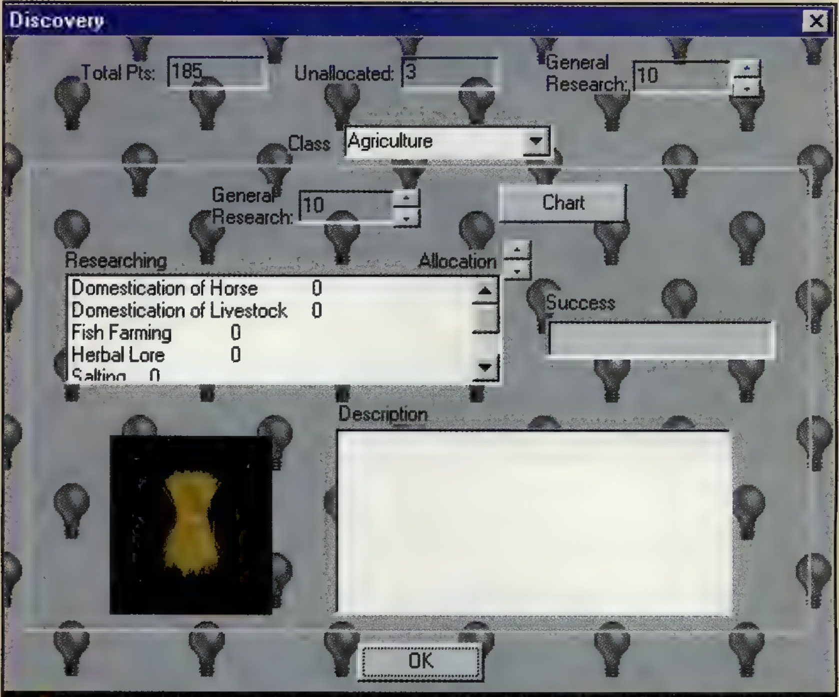


Smallville

Controlled: Foomanchu
RGAB: None
CGAB: None

		Local	National
Population	Total	200,000	430,000
	Unemployed	7%	8%
	Homeless	6%	4%
	Growth	2%	4%
	Starving	4%	2%
Culture	Loyalty	70%	90%
	Education	80%	67%
	Control	95%	93%
	Religion	Pagan	Pagan
Misc	Defense	Land:5, Air:5, Sea:3	Land:4, Air:3, Sea:4
	Transport	Medium	Medium

The city-planning system, like the other parts of the interface, is clean, logical, and thorough.



Discovery

Total Pts: 185
Unallocated: 3
General Research: 10
Class: Agriculture
General Research: 10

Researching	Allocation
Domestication of Horse	0
Domestication of Livestock	0
Fish Farming	0
Herbal Lore	0
Salting	0

Research and development is crucial, and very elaborately developed. The humble "shaduf" may produce dramatic improvements in some economies.

AND NOW FOR THE OBVIOUS QUESTION

No sense in beating around the bush; *PCG* sat down with Adrian Earle, in one of the few corners of Interactive Magic's offices not swarming with production activity, and asked him point-blank:

PCG: Let's start with the obvious question: How does your game differ from *Civilization*?

EARLE: In two ways, really. I've tried to move my game away from the militaristic aspect and more toward the discovery and trade elements. The emphasis on network and modem play allows up to eight people to compete, and that naturally opens up possibilities for trade negotiations and diplomacy that far exceed those in the earlier game. This doesn't mean, of course, that you won't have wars.

PCG: So your whole emphasis is on interaction among real human beings, rather than solo play against the computer?

EARLE: Well, of course you *can* play solo, and I hope we've made it enjoyable to do so, but the inevitable trend in the industry is toward multi-player games. The other major difference is our decision to go with 3D modeling and 3D environments, which I don't think has yet been done in a strategy game of this kind. I'm very curious to see how that format will be received.

PCG: Is the game environment going to be historically and geographically accurate, or will the continents be randomly generated?

EARLE: At the moment, we're not envisaging a real Earth. Each planet will have eight continents, randomly generated, although the player will be able to set basic parameters: a lot of water, versus a lot of land, etc. I know there are a lot of players who enjoy playing on the real Earth, but there are plenty of games out there for them to choose from.

PCG: You mentioned the importance of *audio* in this game...

EARLE: Oh, yes! After all, that's one of the things CDs are so good for! So often, when reviewers bother to mention the music at all, it's usually to comment on how awful it was. We commissioned a *full* score by Donald S. Griffin, and it's so good we think people will play it on its own. It starts simple, with primitive drum beats, then, as civilizations advance, the same themes are elaborated on in various historical styles: medieval, baroque, all the way up to lush, full, Hollywood orchestration. It's really a *tour de force*.

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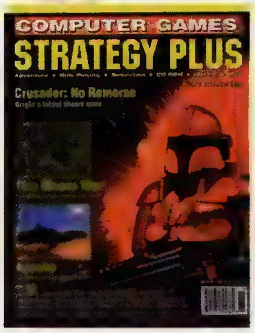
No Remorse

Electronic Entertainment
December '95

"Crusader: No Remorse plays great and looks even better. It's our game of the month. Game play — 5 stars."

"Crusader's one of the best action games out there ..."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PC GAMER
EDITORS'
CHOICE

PCGamer
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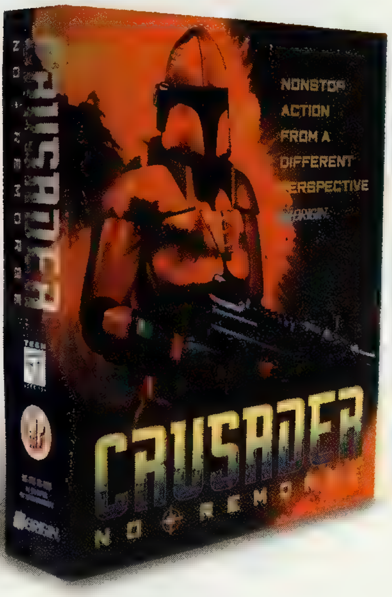
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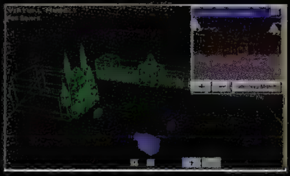

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Product Information Number 101

Behold the New Domark

An industry meeting of the minds means good news for gamers

Domark Software recently merged with three other companies — Eidos, Simis, and Big Red — to create a larger gaming company with more depth and flexibility. The new entity is to be collectively known as Eidos, and Domark will act as a publisher for this group.

Both Big Red and Simis have worked with Domark previously, Domark having published Big Red's *Tank Commander* and Simis' *Mig 29*. Eidos is a technology company specializing in a video compression technique, known as the Eidos Software Codec ('ESC'), which allows computers to compress and play back high-quality video sequences without additional compression hardware.

The ESC software should help to positively position the new group in the CD-ROM gaming field, as more games are written to take advantage of the advanced video compression techniques. Eidos will concentrate on two product lines: high-end flight simulations, and 3D action/adventure games.

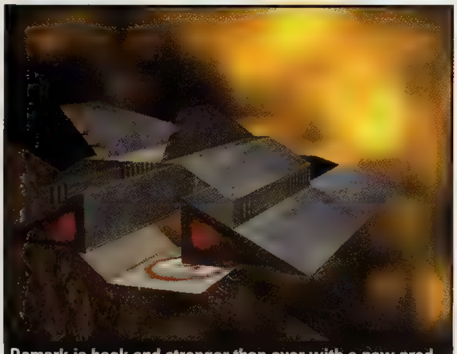
Some of the titles in the works are *Terracide*, a 3D flight shooter, and *Deathtrap Dungeon*.

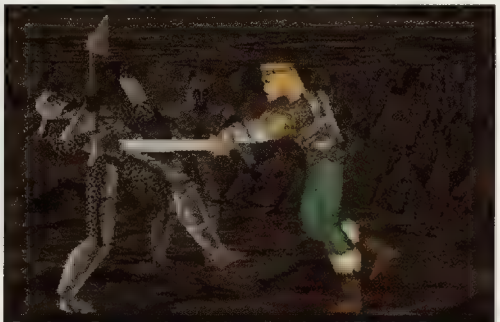
Terracide is designed to take advantage of the new 3D accelerator cards coming out this year (See our story, "Gaming in the 3rd Dimension" on page 100 of this issue for more on 3D cards.). The starfaring flight combat game pits you against enemy starcraft as the last hope to save earth from alien invasion. Be warned though: the enemy fighters boast a fancy Neural Net Artificial Intelligence. This is the opponent's AI, which means that those alien ships will definitely attack you intelligently.

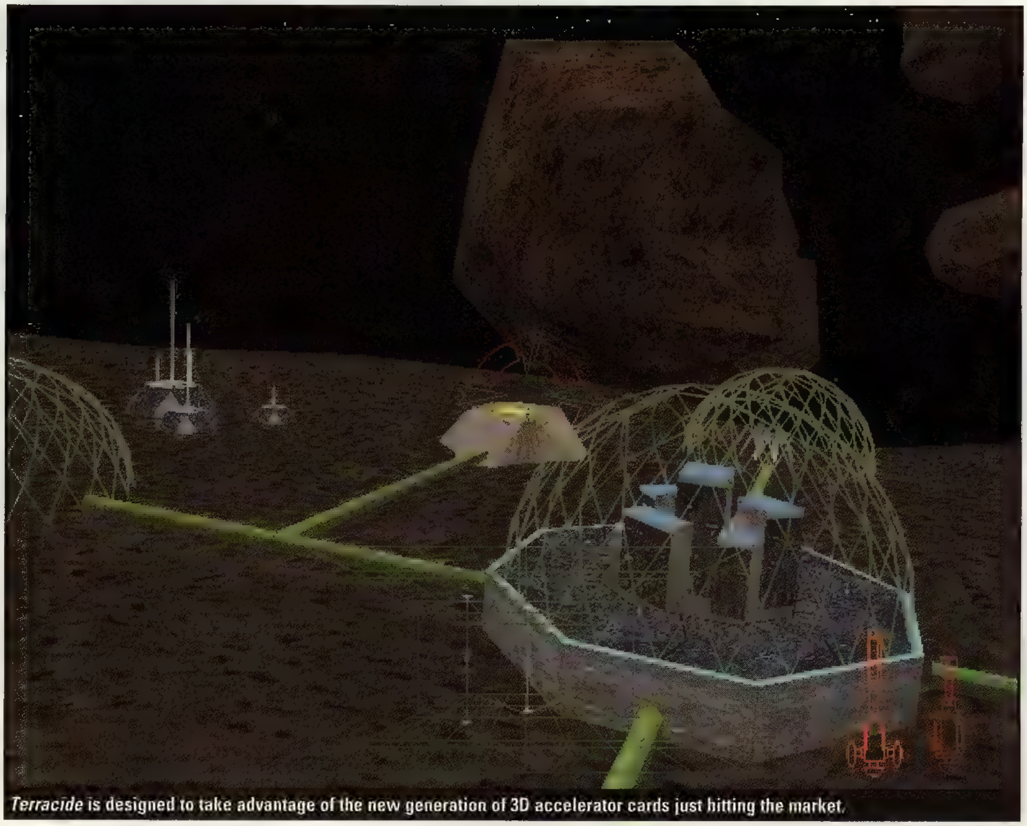
If you're a fan of fantasy roleplaying games, you may remember the Fighting Fantasy gamebooks, a popular combat RPG game of days past in which you and your opponent each had a book filled with different character poses that represented all the possible "moves" your fighter could make.

Well, PC computer technology has clearly made such cumbersome and roundabout methods of simulating a swordfight obsolete.

Domark's new *Deathtrap Dungeon* is based loosely on this series, but adds a three dimensional dungeon for you to explore. All the monsters you'll encounter are fully modelled in 3D, allowing you to view them from different angle even as you strive to destroy them. Sounds like some good old hack and slash, dungeon-busting fun — and an exciting time ahead for Domark!


Domark is back and stronger than ever with a new product line, including *Terracide*, a 3D flight shooter in which you must save the earth from an alien invasion.


***Deathtrap Dungeon*, loosely based on the old Fighting Fantasy gamebooks, will take full advantage of new video compression technology being developed at Eidos.**


***Terracide* is designed to take advantage of the new generation of 3D accelerator cards just hitting the market.**

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Product Information Number 157

Unplugged Plugs In

MTV's live acoustic concert show moves to CD-ROM

"MTV Unplugged," one of MTV's most popular series, features contemporary artists performing their biggest hits on (mainly) acoustic instruments. "MTV Unplugged" has released a successful line of audio CDs and now, for the first time, appears on CD-ROM.

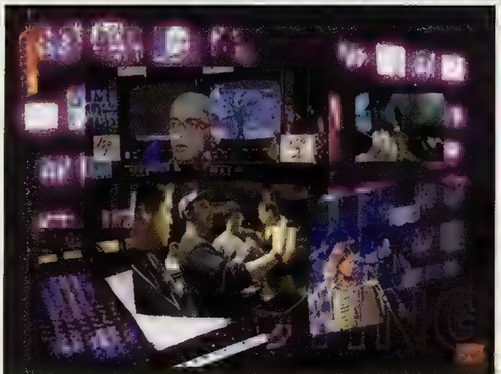
"'MTV Unplugged' is simply about the artists and their music — there are no amps, no pyrotechnics, no clutter between the performers and the audience," said Van Toffler, a senior vice president with MTV. "We created an 'MTV Unplugged' CD-ROM to give music lovers an even more intimate and involved way to experience the show."

The CD features unreleased tracks from previous "Unplugged" performances, including selections by Paul McCartney, Lenny Kravitz, and 10,000 Maniacs.

Users will also be able to "visit" backstage with such performers as Nirvana, the Cranberries, and Melissa Etheridge, watching exclusive interviews and rare performance clips.

Another section of the CD features a musical database on the more than seventy "Unplugged" shows that have appeared over the last six years. You will be able to look up old shows and play audio and video samples from them, as well as examine an index of additional interviews, performance notes, and photos.

MTV Unplugged is produced by Viacom New Media, who also published the MTV hit "Beavis and Butthead" on CD-ROM. With a suggested retail price of $24.95, *MTV Unplugged* costs far less than most CD-ROMs, and is competitively priced with audio CDs.



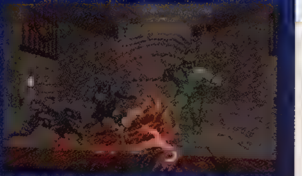
You navigate through the *MTV Unplugged* menus by clicking on television screens.

UNDER CONSTRUCTION

It looks like 1996 is going to be the big year for 3D gaming, with 3D graphic accelerator cards starting to appear just before an onslaught of games using advanced 3D graphics technology, like *Blood*, *Prey*, and — of course — *Quake*. Here's a roundup of some new titles of this kind, coming your way.

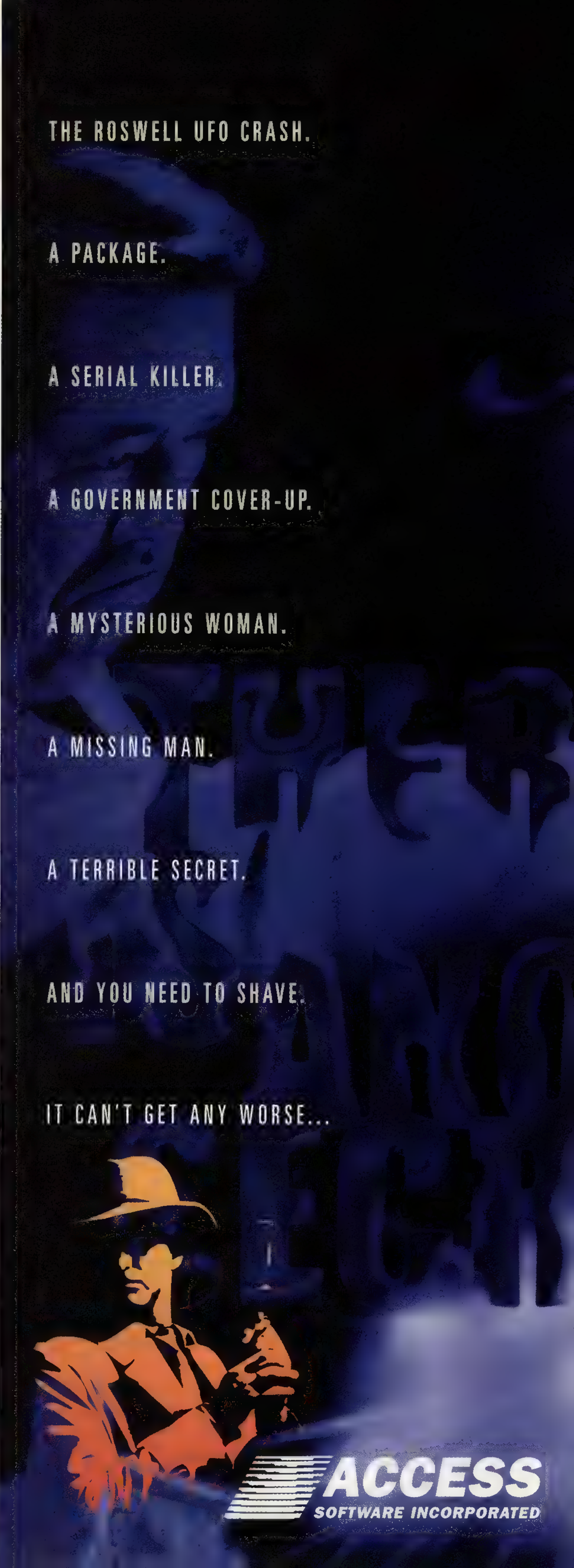
Shadow Warrior

Apogee's 3D Realms division has certainly made its mark in the arena of first-person shooter games. Titles like *Rise of the Triad* and *Duke Nukem 3D* have won them a following, and they're the engineers behind the new Build engine,



Reach out and touch somebody or squeeze this bloody heart and crush the life out of your foe

Continued on page 57



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Product Information Number 81

Long Distance — Without the Charges

VocalTec's Internet Phone is now available on GNN

The Global Network Navigator service is making VocalTec's Internet Phone software available free to its members. GNN is an online service that offers an easy-to-use, all-in-one Internet package, including web access, E-mail, ftp, news and gopher service — and now, thanks to Internet Phone, the ability to talk to people anywhere in the world over the Internet.

Internet
PHONE

"VocalTec is the leader in voice communications on the Internet, which is why we chose to use its Internet Phone with our service," said Lyn Chitow, vice president of GNN. "Bundling Internet Phone with GNN underscores our goal of integrating the best of the breed in technology into our service."

Other major internet providers have incorporated Internet Phone into their services, including PSINet and Netcom.

The product works by connecting you to the phone server, which maintains a list of people actively using Internet Phone. You then select a person to talk to. If you wanted to talk to someone you know, you would need to E-mail them to let them know you want to call them.

Internet Phone employs a unique voice compression algorithm that squeezes voice data down to a bandwidth of only 7.7 kilobytes. Although the sound quality may not compare to true phones, it's certainly a cheaper way to make long distance phone calls.

Internet Phone lets people make voice calls over the Internet. It requires a minimum of a 486/25 Mhz with 8MB of RAM, Windows 3.1 or better, audio hardware including a sound card and microphone, a 14.4k modem, and an Internet Winsock 1.1-compatible TCP/IP connection.

You can try out a sixty second version of the Internet Phone software for yourself. It's available on the VocalTec website, at *http://www.vocaltec.com*; the full version carries an SRP of $99.

To find out more about GNN, visit their website at *http://gnn.com* — or use the Keyword "GNN" on AOL.

Continued from page 55

used in several new 3D games, including *Witchaven*, *TekWar*, and *Powerslave*.

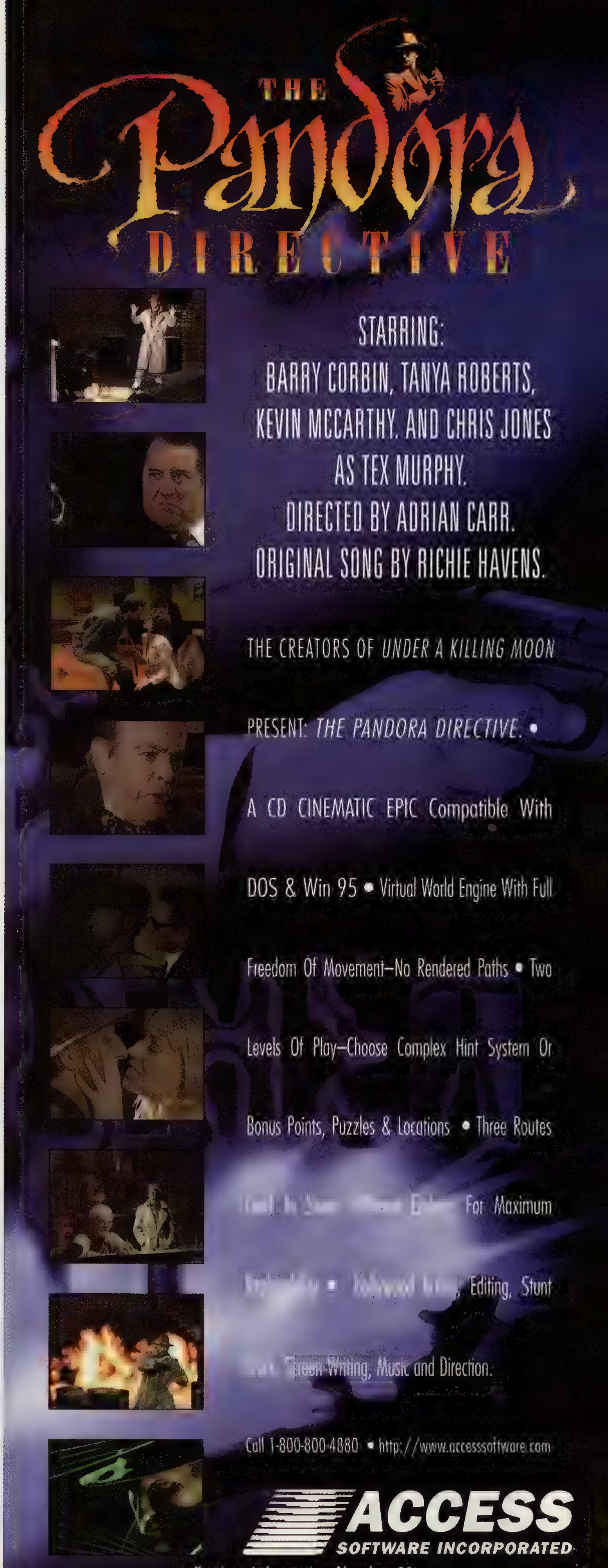
Coming later this year is a brand new title using the same revamped Build engine used in *Duke Nukem 3D*. Called *Shadow Warrior*, it will be a first-person Ninja combat game.

"It's basically a Ninja fantasy game," said George Broussard, the president of 3D Realms. "You just run around and kill everything." The game promises to be filled with blood and gore, and there will be plenty of weapons to choose from: shurikens, Uzis, and explosive-tipped cross-bows. And if that's not enough to warm your heart, how about using *real* hearts on your foes?

"You get to use your enemy's body parts back against him," Broussard said. "We want you to be offended and disgusted."

But beneath all the gore

Continued on page 59



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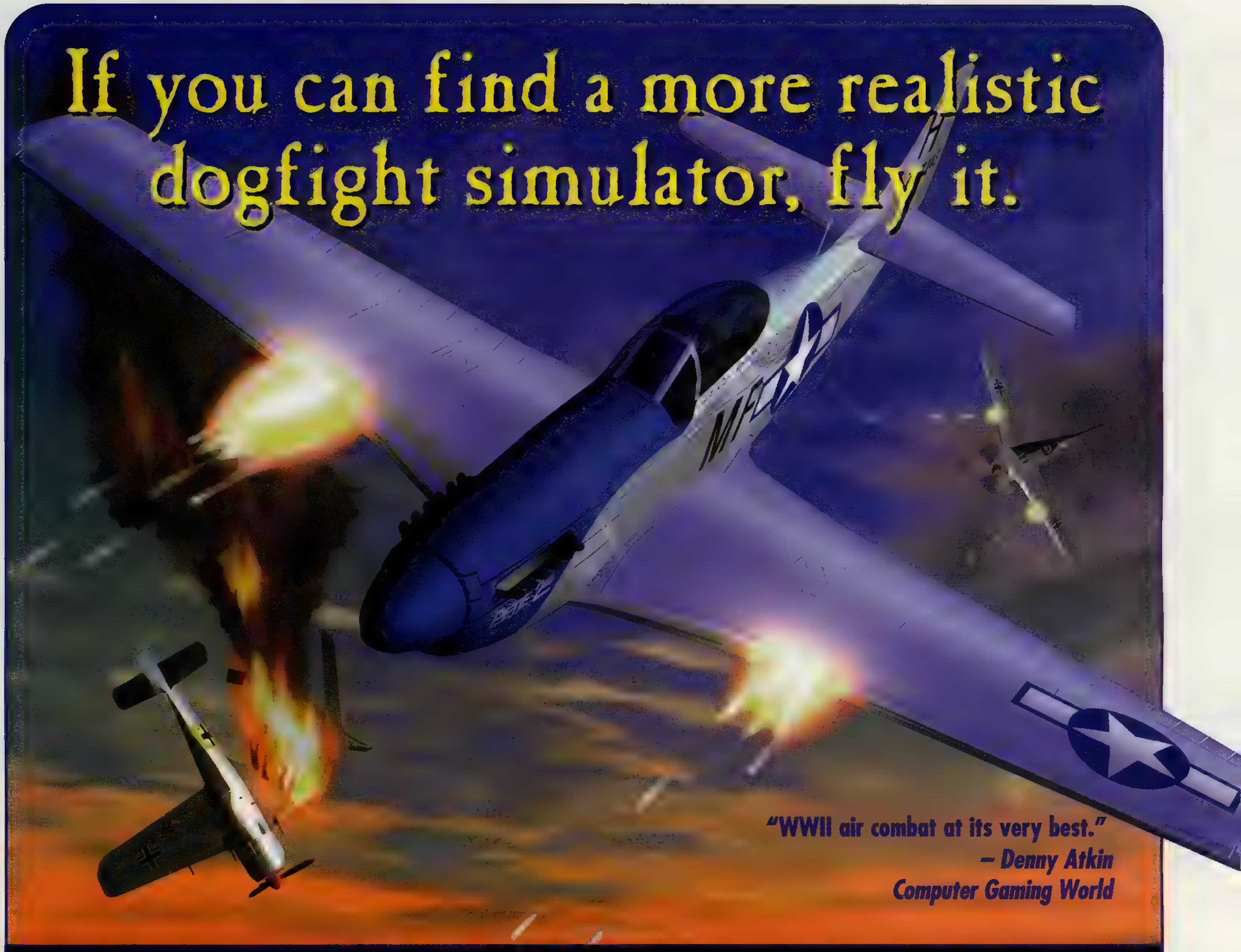
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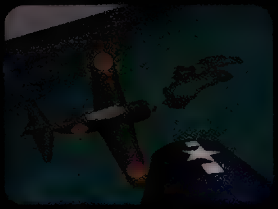

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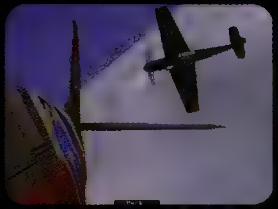
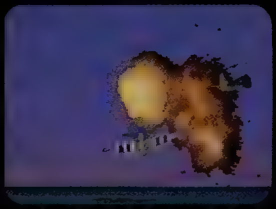


Scan the skies with multiple cockpit views.



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Invasion of the Burger Snatchers

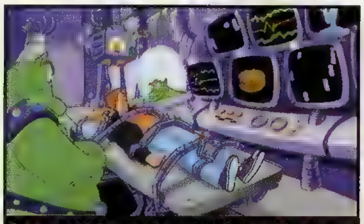
Sanctuary Woods unveils a new game cartoon creation

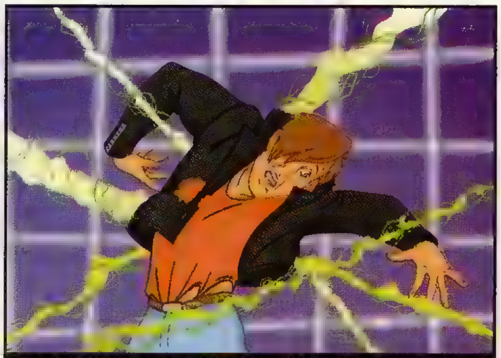
Sanctuary Woods, the people who brought us *The Riddle of Master Lu* and *Buried in Time*, are hard at work on another graphic adventure, due out in February. Titled *Orion Burger*, it's a fully-animated cartoon adventure, with tons of eye-popping visuals.

The story is sort of a whimsical take on the usual alien invasion plot, as the gluttonous Zlarg and his sidekick Flumix arrive on Earth to harvest protein for their intergalactic fast-food chain, Orion Burger. The catch is they're not allowed to harvest intelligent life, so before they can begin, they select one human to take some intelligence tests. Naturally, that's you.

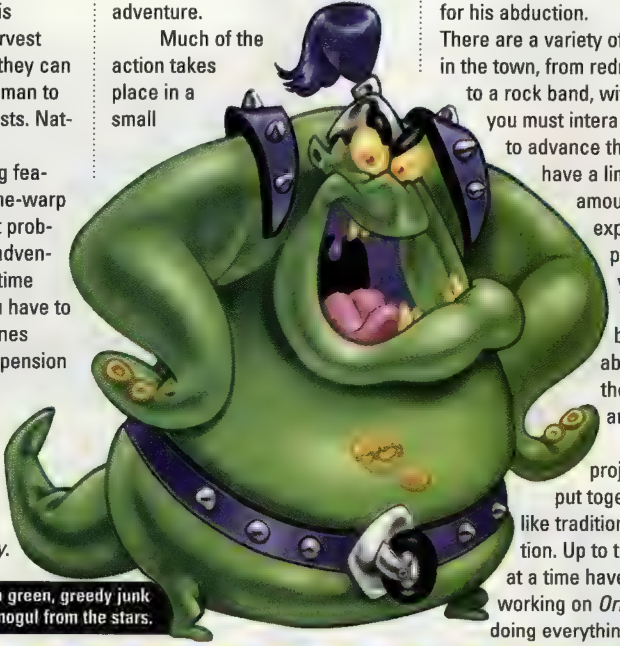
The most interesting feature of the story is the time-warp effect. One of the biggest problems with other graphic adventure games is that every time you die, or start over, you have to go through the same scenes again and again. Any suspension of disbelief goes out the window.

To get around this problem, the *Orion* team has come up with a plot device borrowed from the movie *Groundhog Day*. The main character (Wilbur) is caught in a time warp where he relives each day with his memories intact, and is free to choose a new course of action. The program remembers where you've been and what you've done, so you won't be forced to backtrack. This premise works ideally with the gameplay of a graphic adventure.


As part of his experiments, Zlarg subjects you to a test of your brainpower, literally. Zap!


You play Wilbur, captured by aliens. It's up to you to stop humanity from being ground into hamburger.

Much of the action takes place in a small town on Earth, where Wilbur has to solve certain puzzles in order to get ready for his abduction. There are a variety of characters in the town, from redneck cops to a rock band, with whom you must interact in order to advance the plot. You have a limited amount of time to explore and prepare yourself before being abducted by the aliens for another test.


Zlarg is a green, greedy junk food mogul from the stars.

The project is being put together much like traditional animation. Up to thirty people at a time have been working on *Orion Burger*, doing everything from voice-acting and programming to sound effects and animation.

Working out of Victoria, British Columbia, much of the team has its roots in Hollywood, and the staff's many credits include animation on "Ghostbusters" and *The Wall*, voice acting from "Animaniacs" and story consultanting on the "Newhart" show.

"A lot of the people in Victoria have been working in Los Angeles a long time, and it's a rough place to live," says Robert Aitken, product manager for *Orion Burger*. "They just sort of come up here for the relative serenity and pleasantness of Victoria. So in terms of writers and animators, we have a lot of local talent."

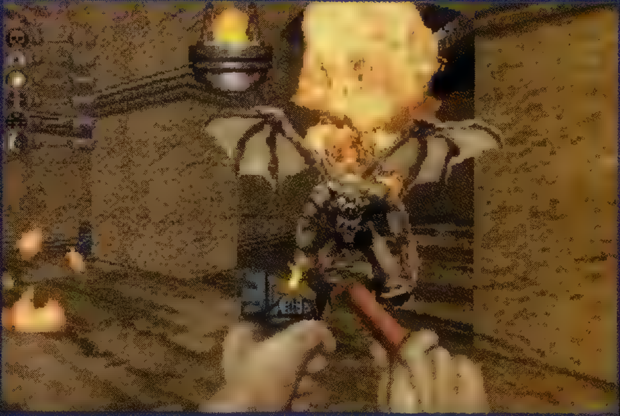
For more info on *Orion Burger*, call Sanctuary Woods at (415) 286-6000.

Continued from page 57

is solid gameplay, and like *Duke 3D*, the game features underwater action, moving sectors, ducking, crawling, flying, swimming, mirrors, slopes and spiral stairs.

Blood

What appears to be 3D Realms' final release for the Build engine will be a truly terrifying trip into the realms of the Undead. *Blood* takes place in a ghoulishly gothic mansion, and features battles against zombies and other shambling, shuffling horrors.


Gargoyles, zombies, dynamite and more await in *Blood*, a new first-person shooter from 3D Realms.

One of the weapons you can use is the voodoo doll. Stick a pin into it, and any enemy on the screen will take damage, without knowing who's causing it. "It's so much fun in deathmatch," Broussard said. "You just follow a guy around, jabbing him."

Like the entire line of 3D Realms first-person games,

Continued on page 61

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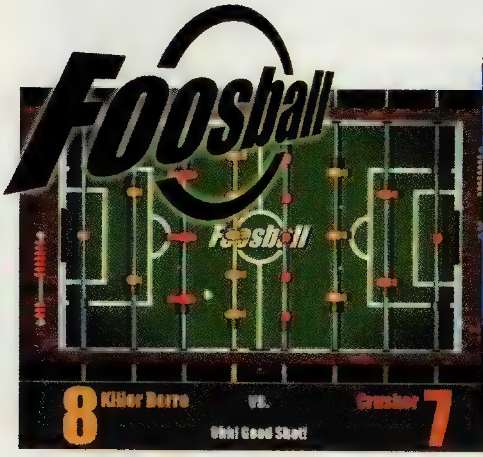
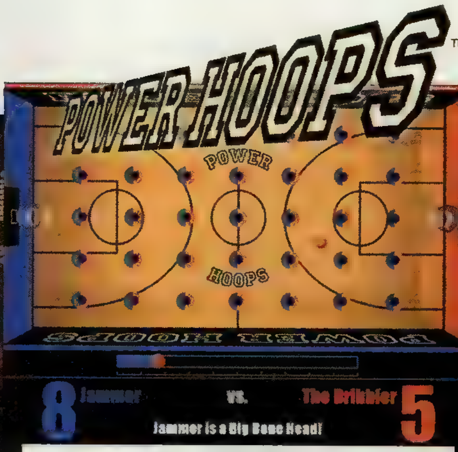
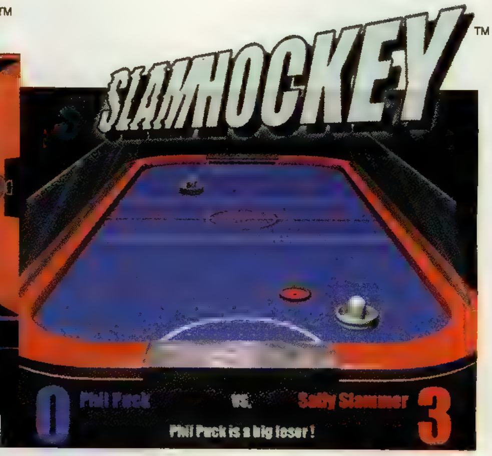

Foosball
8 Killer Berre vs. Crusher 7
Ohh! Good Shot!

Foosball: All the action of the original—spin, pass, block, and score!


POWER HOOPS™
8 Jammer vs. The Dribbler 5
Jammer is a Big Bone Head!

Power Hoops: Block, steal or shoot, in regular or multiple ball mode!


SLAMHOCKEY™
0 Phil Puck vs. Sally Slammer 3
Phil Puck is a big loser!

SlamHockey: Chip it, chop it, cut it! Even go over the line in "super battle mode!"

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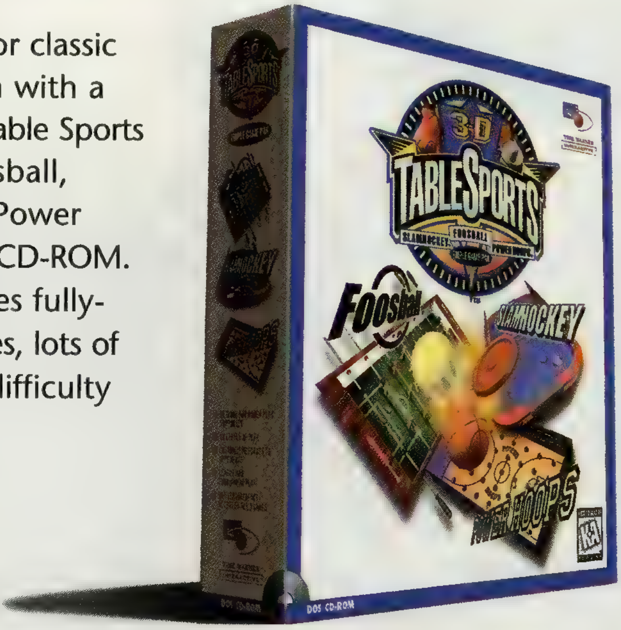
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See your local software retailer or call 1-800-482-3766 to order direct.

Product Information Number 170

Descent off the Docket

Interplay and Lasersoft reach settlement

Last December, we reported that Interplay Productions, the makers of *Descent*, *Cyberia*, and other popular titles, filed a lawsuit against Lasersoft, a budget CD-ROM distributor, because of a dispute over Lasersoft's *Dimensions for Descent* package.

The Lasersoft product featured a collection of HOG files, which are new game levels for *Descent* (like WAD files are new levels for *Doom*). Many companies have packaged and sold collections of *Doom* add-ons, due to that game's immense popularity. With the success of *Descent*, Interplay saw the same thing happening to its game.

Interplay's lawsuit against Lasersoft complained that the packaging of the product too closely resembled the packaging on their original *Descent* game, and they subsequently won an injunction. Lasersoft was forced by the court to remove the *Dimensions* title from store shelves.

Now the two companies have reached an agreement. Lasersoft has acknowledged that their *Dimensions* product infringed on Interplay's copyright, and agreed not to market any more products that are designed to work with *Descent* or any of Interplay's other games.

In return, Lasersoft has been given the co-exclusive rights to distribute the preview of *Descent II*, the sequel to *Descent*. "This settlement provides new opportunities for both companies," said Scott Addyman, president of Lasersoft. "We are a leading publisher of budget CD-ROMs and Interplay's interactive previews are a perfect fit for our product line."

Although the *Descent* controversy seems to have been settled, and may have set a precedent for other gamemakers, there are still many questions left about level add-ons in general. With the flood of big-name 3D games with level editors coming out, more legal battles are likely.

New levels for *Descent*, called HOGs, sparked an explosive controversy.

Continued from page 59

Blood **will support modem play and network games with as many as eight players.**

Xenophage

Apogee enters the fighting-game arena with ***Xenophage*****, which should be out in the first quarter of 1996. Featuring eleven different monsters rendered in 3D and more than 1,500 frames of character animation,** ***Xenophage*** **will be as much a visual feast as a melee. Special features include fatalities, humiliations, and resurrections. With humiliations, you will be able to beat on your opponent's body long after he's deceased — but keep it up, and he might just be resurrected, to enter the fray again and pay you back. The dynamic backgrounds feature zooming and**

The characters in *Xenophage* have artificial intelligence that should challenge the most devoted fighting-game fan.

Continued on page 63

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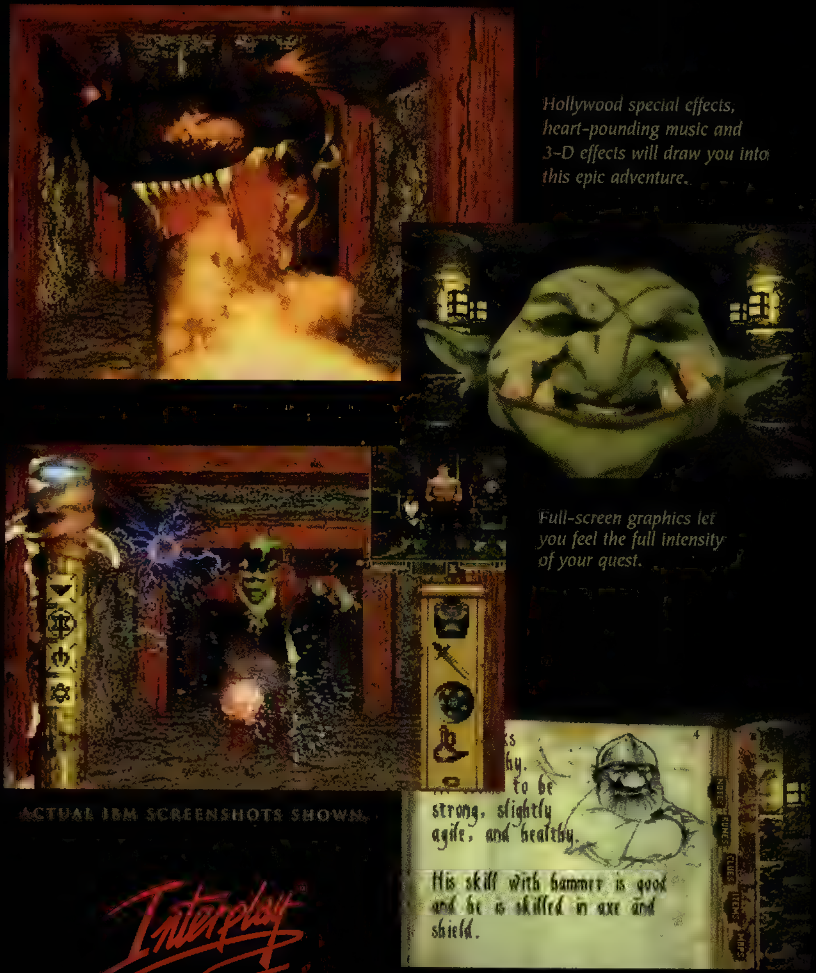

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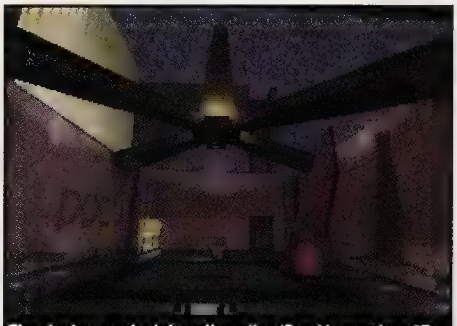
Product Information Number 128

The Quake-killer?

3D Realms' *Prey* may be the next big thing



The shadow on the left wall reading 'Prey' is cast by a 3D sign in the center of the room.

With as much as we've been hearing about *Quake*, it might be a little reassuring to know that others are working just as hard to bring gaming to the next plateau.

Prey is being developed by 3D Realms, and is based on a totally new 3D graphic engine (also named Prey) that's much more advanced than the already impressive Build engine used in *Duke Nukem 3D*. "This really goes a long way past *Duke Nukem*'s ability," explains George Broussard, the president of 3D Realms. "We don't think we're very far behind *Quake* at this point."

The Prey engine will allow true 3D with no restrictions, letting designers place rooms over rooms, bridges going across bridges, and bring roofs and cellars and any structure imaginable into the gameworld. The ray-traced lighting effects will create a realistic atmosphere, and all the characters in the game will cast shadows as they move around the game environment.

The new engine will also feature a process called "MIP-mapping," which eliminates that shining pixel effect you often see in *Doom* as you move towards a texture. MIP-mapping works by storing up to six different textures for each surface, then displaying them depending on your distance.

Similar effects will be used on the fully rendered characters and objects in the game world, meaning there will be no two-dimensional sprites in the game. For example in *Doom*, as you walk around a dead body, the body always looks the same because it's just a flat picture drawn on the screen. In *Prey* you'll view objects from any possible angle, because they'll exist as fully rendered 3D pieces.

The storyline is one of the last things this team worries about, but a rough sketch has a master alien race kidnapping different creatures and pitting them against one another in combat for their own amusement. Every level will be different, designed around an alien homeworld, thus allowing the level designers to go wild with the new engine.

"The idea here is to be innovative in every way possible," said Scott Miller, the president of Apogee, which will publish *Prey*. "There's going to be tons of stuff in here that's never even been seen before."

Network gaming is built in, with support for maybe twenty or thirty people on a local network. The Internet gaming feature will be limited by the capabilities of the server itself, not the game.

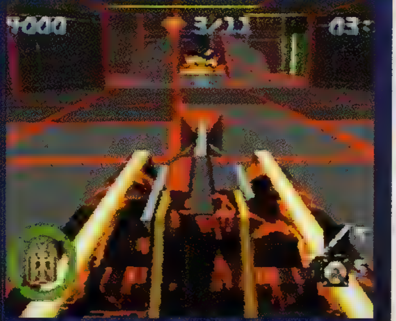
Apogee and 3D Realms hope that this new engine will mark a new plateau in game design. "With this kind of technology," says 3D Realms' Broussard, "we're at the point that whatever you want to do, you can do. The computers are fast enough, the engine is fast enough, and it does everything."

Look for *Prey* late in summer of 1996.

Continued from page 61

scrolling, and the soundtrack is being put together by Bobby Prince, the composer for *Doom* and *Doom II*.

Assault Rigs



A high-tech tank explores the cyberspace combat arena of *Assault Rigs*.

Coming this Spring from Psygnosis is *Assault Rigs*, a port of a popular tank combat game for the Sony PlayStation. Set in a rich, futuristic 3D world that looks like a high-tech nightmare, *Rigs* lets you choose one of three Assault Rigs, each a different design balancing speed, armor and firepower.

Gameplay should be riveting and fast-paced, as you race against the clock and pound enemy steel. The game also

Continued on page 65

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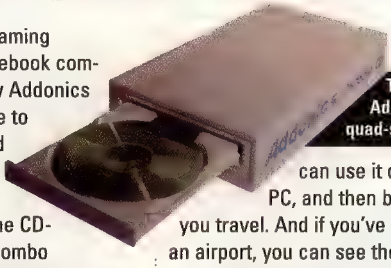
WWW Site (http://www.3drealms.com) CIS (Keyword REALMS) Software Creations BBS (508) 368-7036

Product Information Number 117

Gaming on the Go

Addonics offers portable CD-ROM drive



The PCDS from Addonics: a portable quad-speed CD-ROM drive

Looking for a one-step gaming solution for that old notebook computer? Hook up the new Addonics PCDS portable CD-ROM drive to your notebook computer, and you'll have 16-bit sound and quad-speed CD-ROM access immediately. Since the CD-ROM drive and sound-card combo bypasses the installation hassles that are so common on notebook computers, you simply connect the drive to the parallel or enhanced parallel port on your computer, and install the PCDS software. If you need to print, you just run the printer into the CD-ROM drive.

Another advantage of this system is its flexibility, since the drive can be switched from computer to computer quite easily. You can use it on your desktop PC, and then bring it with you as you travel. And if you've ever been stuck in an airport, you can see the potential...

In addition, the PCDS drive is equipped with both a microphone input and a MIDI instrument port. The sound level can be adjusted manually or with the software, and it uses a front-loading motorized tray for disk insertion.

The PCDS is available now, with a suggested retail price of $499. For more information, including pricing and availability, contact Addonics at (800) 787-8580.

Big Screens, Small Price

Orchestra's monitor music to gamers' ears

A nice big monitor is a great gaming upgrade — and also an expensive one. If you're planning to do some monitor shopping, be prepared for sticker shock. With high-end 17" monitors costing upwards of $750, the big-screen experience may be out of reach. But help is on the way.

Orchestra Multimedia Systems has announced a 17" monitor that's as easy on your wallet as on your eyes. With a street price of around $400, the new Tympani costs less than many 15" monitors. Orchestra is targeting the Tympani at the home user, who might not need the high-end technology of more expensive monitors.

The Tympani is so affordable because it has a .42mm dot pitch, as opposed to the more typical .28mm dot pitch. This might make a noticeable difference in high-end graphics programs, but shouldn't really effect your standard PC game.

The Tympani is currently available for $429 retail, and comes with a one-year manufacturer's warranty. For more information, including local availability, contact Orchestra Multimedia Systems at (800) 237-9988.

Continued from page 63

features five different camera angles from which to watch the mayhem, and it can be played by one or two gamers.

Savage

Clawing its way into the gaming market later this April is *Savage*, a first-person twist on games like *Wolf* and *Lion*.

Savage puts you in the paws of a lion, fighting for survival in the wilds of a realistic Serengeti environment. The game is one of the first releases of the new Discovery Multimedia label, which publishes computer games and CD-ROMs based on tie-ins to shows from cable television's Discovery Channel.

Connections

Discovery Multimedia is also gearing up to release a game based on James Burke's popular series on the BBC and The Learning Channel.

Burke's show is based on the often unexpected connections that lead from early innovations to today's technology, and the *Connections* game challenges players to explore a new world where these connections are the only logic.

Continued on page 67

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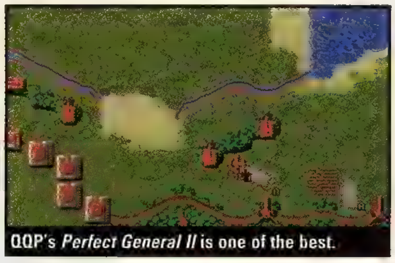

QQP's *Perfect General II* is one of the best.

Perfect General Missing in Action

QQP's future on hold

Last March we told you that American Laser Games had acquired Quantum Quality Productions, developers of popular wargames like *The Perfect General.*

At the time we were told that QQP would remain a separate entity, and continue to develop its wargames undisturbed. American Laser Games would in turn give QQP better marketing clout, making it easier for buyers to find their products on the shelves.

The Perfect General and its sequel, *The Perfect General II,* were two of our favorite wargames. They were remarkable for their overriding sense of fun, their accessibility, and the fact that they were neither tediously complex nor boringly simple.

Well, the latest word is that American Laser Games, the parent company of Quantum Quality Productions, has shut down QQP's New Jersey location.

ALG says it has retained the outside developers used by QQP, and will continue to publish QQP games from its New Mexico headquarters. But QQP founder Bruce Williams and the rest of the old crew are effectively out of work — and not yet ready to comment. As we learn what's ahead for all involved, you can bet we'll get you more facts.

The PC Gamer Playlist

We have to admit — we were surprised that Santa remembered us this holiday season. After all, we did move all the way across the country from the lovely mountains and shores of North Carolina to the even lovlier mountains and shores of California. But lucky for us, we were still on Santa's list. Our stockings were filled with these great games that we've been playing non-stop.

1. *Beavis & Butt-Head in Virtual Stupidity*/Viacom New Media — Everybody
2. *The Dig*/LucasArts — Todd, Dan, Lisa
3. *Crusader: No Remorse*/Origin — Todd, Dan
4. *Command & Conquer*/Virgin — Mike, Jason, Dean
5. *IndyCar Racing II*/Papyrus — Dean, Jason
6. *Wing Commander IV*/Origin — Everybody
7. *NHL '96*/Electronic Arts — Todd, Jason
8. *Heroes of Might and Magic*/New World Computing — Joe, Matt, Beth
9. *Descent 2*/Parallax Software — Dan, Mike
10. *Hexen*/id Software — Jason, Dean, Lisa

IndyCar Racing II

Continued from page 62

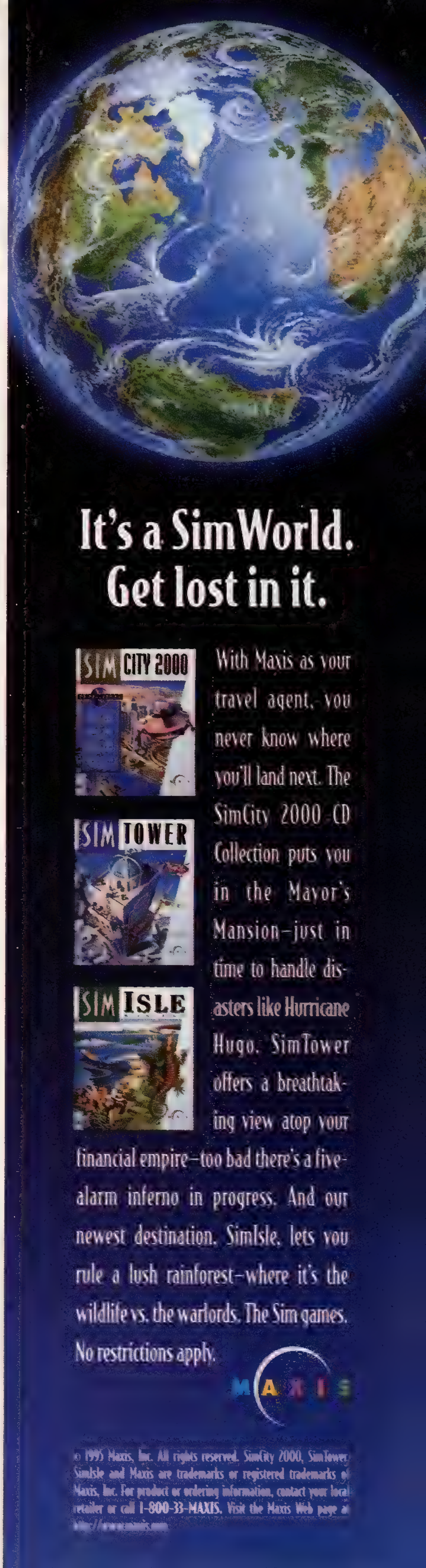
On the drawing board...

Some late items we learned about just before press time:

- Fox Interactive is coming out with a game based on Bruce Willis' Die Hard movies. Ocean Software is working on a still-untitled tank combat game.
- The Sanctuary Woods team responsible for the excellent graphic adventure, *The Riddle of Master Lu,* is developing a new game called *Scarecrow,* although they wouldn't tell us much more than that.
- Electronic Arts is working on a new mystery adventure starring Sherlock Holmes and Dr. Watson.

Sherlock Holmes is on the case in EA's new graphic adventure.

PCG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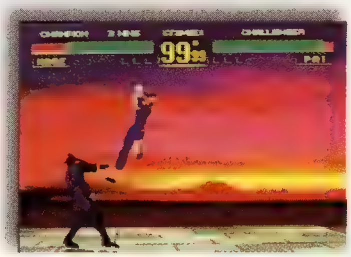

Virtua Fighter Remix

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Interplay's Descent™: Destination Saturn

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Product Information Number 107

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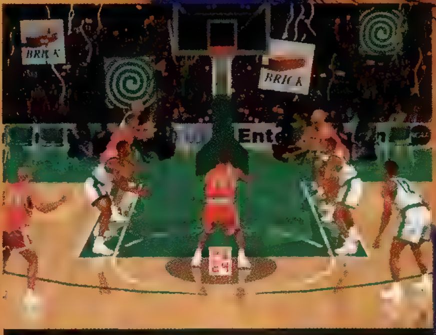

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THE NEED FOR SPEED

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Multimedia

THE NEXT GENERATION

Most games that wear the label "Interactive Movie" are neither. But new technologies — and a new concern for play value — are poised to change the way you look at multimedia.

by T. Liam McDonald

You can't have a trend without buzzwords. Take the most ubiquitous: multimedia, information superhighway, CD-ROM, interactive movie, interactive entertainment.

Now that we have those words out of the way, let's discuss what it's really all about: *games*.

That is, after all, what we're here to talk about. But people don't seem to like that word anymore. It smacks of kids on skateboards and sticky video arcades. It's trivial, something adults don't do. So we dress it up and call it "interactive" or "multimedia" something.

Folks, they're games.

An example of what I mean: A couple of years back, the head of a game development company, in defending the slim game content of his title, said "I'm not sure what you're talking about. I don't make *games*, I make *entertainment*."

Frank Sinatra, rollercoasters, and strippers make entertainment. Whether he admits it or not, this gentleman makes games.

That's not to say the industry isn't changing. The technology is changing rapidly, allowing new ways for designers to create their games. More people are buying home PCs, and more people are getting online. There's a drift towards the mainstream and away from the hard-core "hobby" gamers, so titles are, by and large, becoming simpler. This is to make them more accessible to people who — we are led to believe — won't understand such weighty concepts as

removing the mayonnaise from inventory and using it on the totem pole to get Indy into the cave.

And then there's one of the worst — yet one of the most promising — things to happen to games in 1995: live-action video. Now every programmer who grabs a Betacam and stands a couple of people in front of a chroma-green screen thinks he's a new Spielberg or Hitchcock (and we thought they were insufferable before...).

We first saw video in games with the *Sherlock Holmes: Consulting Detective* titles from iCom. At the time, these games were criticized for their short playing times and low interactivity, but compared to many recent click-the-mouse-watch-the-video-clip games, *SHCD* was practically *Civilization*.

There really is no set definition of multimedia gaming, as we'll see. Let's say it predominately includes games with live-action video, and possibly some titles with extensive voice acting. A look back at 1995 shows a pretty bleak landscape littered with a few titles that could be considered excellent (*Wing Commander III*) or even good (*Phantasmagoria*), some that are passable (*Buried in Time, Silent Steel*), and countless abysmal titles that seem to exist only because somebody had video footage (*Bloodwings: Pumpkinhead's Revenge, Man Enough, The Last Dynasty* — the list goes on).

New games like Sierra's *Gabriel Knight II: The Beast Within* balance multimedia flash with good, old-fashioned gameplay.

The bad news is, with so few good titles, it's obvious we have some work to do. The good news is that things seems to be looking up, with recent titles like *Gabriel Knight II: The Beast Within*, *Mission Critical*, and *Ripper*.

There are a number of issues that will drive the next year or two in multimedia gaming: 3D accelerator boards; Windows 95; hardware-independent full-motion, full-screen video; and, of course, those always-prickly design issues.

Hardware and technology drive this industry, often to its detriment. Content gets swept away as people rush to exploit the latest gee-whiz technology. The simple truth is, you can't have multimedia without the medium, and monitors, sounds cards, video boards, and CPUs are the medium.

In the following story, we're going to discuss some of these issues as we preview three upcoming, and very, very different, multimedia games: *Angel Devoid: Face of the Enemy* (Mindscape/Electric Dreams), *Noir* (CyberDreams), and *Titanic* (Cyberflix). Let's start by examining the biggest — and most challenging — element in multimedia: video.

Walk Like a Duck

Video, video, video....

Where does one begin? It all started with CD-ROMs and their ability to store massive amounts of data. At first, that extra space meant dialog could be spoken instead of printed on the screen. Games got were labeled multimedia because they had the programmer's secretary, assistant, and Uncle Moe doing voice-overs of all the dialog. Needless to say, few were impressed. Then clever developers realized they could shoot a game like a low-budget TV show and *digitize the video*.

Zots! What a breakthrough! Games would be ultra-realistic, not cartoonish! It would be like an *interactive TV show*! Why, we'd have a *whole new industry*! We'll call it .... *interactive movies*! It'll be all the rage!

Well, it's about two years later, and I defy you to find a major developer who willingly calls their new title an "interactive movie."

"We've dropped the term 'interactive movies' because it's been ruined," comments Bill Appleton of Cyberflix.

"With interactive movies," says Mindscape's Milton Bland, Associate Producer of *Angel Devoid*, "it's mostly 'watch the movie, have very little interactivity,' and that's what we want to stay away from."

David Mullich of Cyberdreams: "I'm not sure what an interactive movie is. By its nature, a movie is *not* interactive." And so on.

So what happened?

Well, *The Psychotron, Who Killed Brett Penance?, Voyeur*, and about a hundred other atrocious interactive movies happened. There is, obviously, a central problem: video ain't interactive. You can't possibly film a human doing all the potential actions a gamer might require of a character that was truly interactive.

Well — you *could*, but it would take gigabytes of space, and the end-point of one action would be almost impossible to match up with the starting point of the next. You can see this difficulty in Sierra's *Phantasmagoria*, where your character comes to a stock-still standing position, arms at her side, chest shoved out, every time she finishes an action.

There's another problem: acting. Unless actors are professionals, the illusion is lost. We don't expect pixels to be Olivier, or even Stallone. But we expect people to act at least as well as characters in an episode of television's "Xeena: Warrior Princess." (Well, *better* than that, hopefully.) Until recently, this has been missing, with game performances turned in by amateurs or, more recently, known actors whose careers are, let us say, in a lull.

And then there's the final problem: video quality. It's been mostly pretty poor, although it is definitely getting better. Full-screen, full-motion video is hard to pull off on a PC. For the past year, we've been told there's only one solution: a special piece of hardware called an MPEG board. MPEG (which stands for Motion Picture Experts Group) is a hardware standard that software developers can follow in order to have TV-quality video. And it *does* work. The best recent example is the professional-quality video in the MPEG version of *Silent Steel*.

But the installed base of MPEG boards is wafer-thin, so few big publishers bother to create exclusively for it ("exclusively" is the key word). Without a "killer app" (like *Rebel Assault, The 7th Guest,* and *Myst* were for CD-ROM), PC owners aren't going to bother investing $400 in a new board. There has simply been no compelling reason to buy an MPEG board, and now there's likely to be *no* reason.

The simple fact is, hardware-dependent standards like MPEG face two possible paths: they'll either be included directly into standard video boards, or even the next generation of CPU, or they will go the way of the woolly mammoth. Frankly, I vote for the latter. The reason? Well, there's something new out there — it's cheaper, and it quacks.

The name of the company is The Duck Corporation, and the name of their technology is TrueMotion "S". The "S" is for "software," and what TrueMotion does is create 30 frames-per-second, full-screen video without extra hardware. MPEG works like this: images are transferred quickly by determining the less "significant" bits of data in an image and removing them. MPEG takes individual frames of a moving image about four seconds apart, and then "predicts" the motion that took place in this gap by common elements in the two frames. This reduces data transfer and allows it to flow smoothly, but also makes strenuous calculation demands, requiring an extra processor (the MPEG board). The missing frames also mean that you can't edit into any point, resulting in occasionally rough transitions.

The Duck's TrueMotion not only provides the needed 30 fps using only their proprietary (and, apparently, very closely guarded) software technology, but also allows this same data to be used in Video for Windows, DOS, Quick Time, Windows AVIs, UNIX, 3DO, and Sega Saturn formats. The result is about 35 minutes of video per CD-ROM. Better yet, their Comprending technology (for "compression" and "rendering") allows frames and matted video to be controlled by a mouse in real-time. This is one step closer to live action, video-based sprites. It also means that video can become drastically more interactive.

"TrueMotion will hopefully bring television quality to people that work with video," comments Duck president Stanley Marder. "The biggest problem the consumer has had with the use of video on either PCs or game platforms is that their expectation is television, and they haven't been able to see that until some of these titles have started to come out."

The earliest use of TrueMotion in a game was seen in *The Horde*, but it's the latest game that pushes the technology to its limits. It's called *Angel Devoid,* and you've never seen video used quite like this.

The Face of the Enemy

Angel Devoid: Face of the Enemy, starts with an interesting, albeit improbable, premise. You are on the trail of master criminal Angel Devoid when there's an accident. You wake up in a hospital, only to find that, somehow, you have Angel's face. You must go into Angel's world, the dark side of Neo-City, to solve the mystery and put and end to Angel.

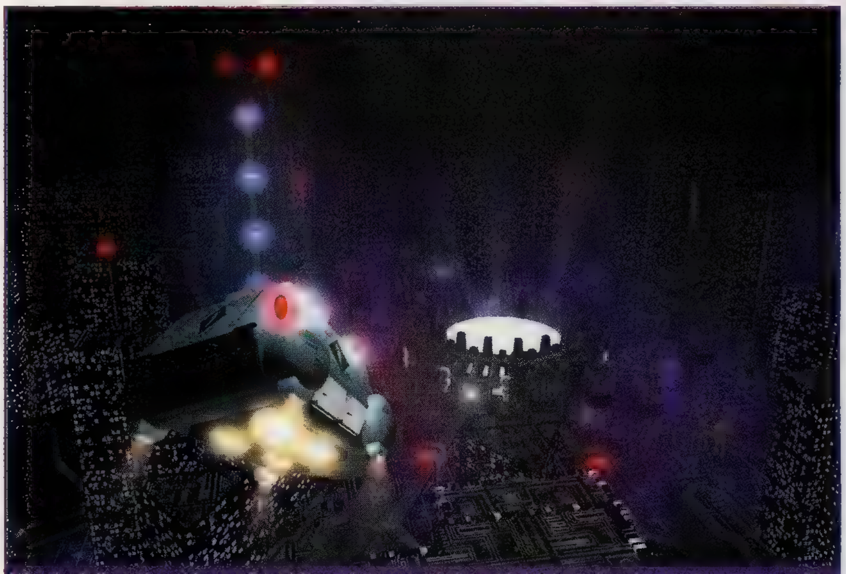
What makes *Angel Devoid* so different? Well, it's a first-person, real-time game done completely with live-action video. You have a mouse and inventory, and you steer your character through the environment, encountering real people and having to make real-time decisions. It's an adventure game — except, as producer Milt Bland points out, "instead of using a ten-year old paint program, we're using video. It's not just video for video's sake: the video *is* the game. It's there to tell the story, it's the media that we're using."

This is the first game created by Electric Dreams, and it shows the high level of polish you might expect from a company that's worked in the business field for some time. They worked with a lot of the usual tools used for any new graphic adventure: SGI machines, 3D graphics rendered with *Alias*, and so on. But for the most important part of the game, the video, they turned to Duck's TrueMotion rather than MPEG. As Harvey Lee, ED's VP of product development, observes, "It gave us the best quality at the lowest cost per transfer rate, and we maintained compatibility with as many machines as possible. However, we had to work very extensively with Duck, because we're at a stage with TrueMotion that no other company is at."

Adds Bland, "TrueMotion renders better and faster. It gives us high quality without people having to buy specific hardware. Up until, say, *Johnny Mnemonic*, every other video was really bad-looking in the playback, and the Duck tools are just steps ahead of all the others."

But they also knew the traps almost all other video-based games fall into: low interactivity. "If you took *The Daedalus Encounter*," Lee points out, "and yanked out all that nice Tia Carrere video, then what you were left with was a string of simple logic puzzles that you could have gotten as shareware. The video means nothing. We've taken video to the next step. It affects the gameplay. You learn

Mindscape's *Angel Devoid* will place human actors (like the guy on our cover) on spectacular computer-generated sets.



Like the full-motion video in *Angel Devoid*, the game's beautiful, 3D-rendered animations are used in service of the game's story, not just as eye-candy.

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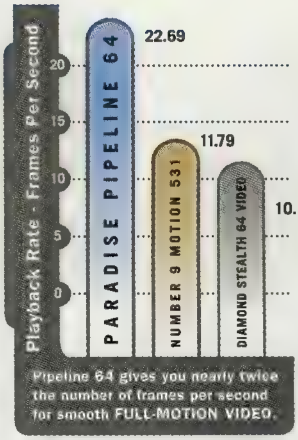

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PARADISE

from it. You actually discover things that are necessary later on in the video. Video is part of the gameplay.

"We've tried to remain very flexible with the video in order to increase the interactivity," Lee continues. "So instead of doing very long sequences, what we've done is seamlessly merged large groupings of smaller pieces of video. This gives us points and places within the game in order to affect change. It allows the user to make decisions at multiple locations as to what he wants to do, without first having to weed through a minute of video where he can't do *anything*. We've done a lot more of what is done in traditional graphic animation. In graphic animation, there are lots of points where you can interrupt the action, and the user can decide what he wants to do. We tried to do that on the video side by going to the extreme of creating lots of smaller segments and seamlessly putting them together."

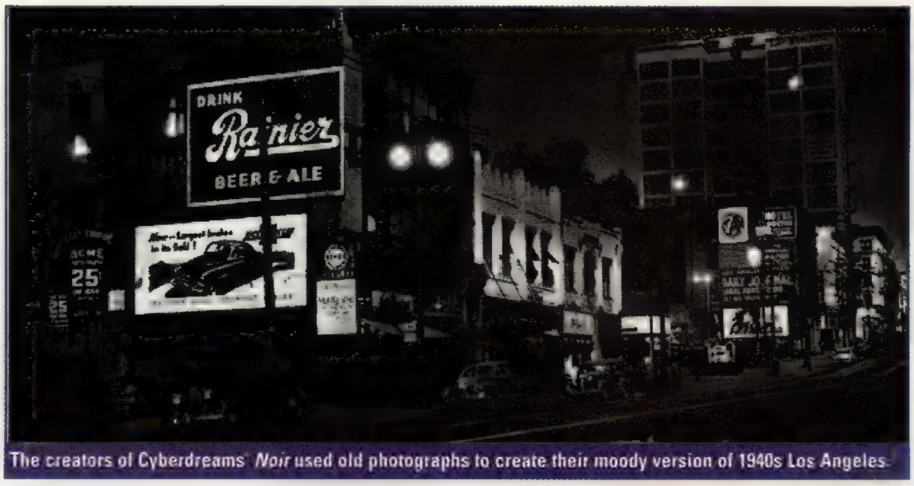
This means that the world of *Angel Devoid* is always alive and the clock is always ticking. From the second you wake up in the hospital, you have to start making decisions, or you're dead. In a few seconds, you have to choose to go left or right. Right, and you're dead; left, and you have to make another decision. And so on, with more opportunities to die in the first few seconds than you ever find in most games.

This was meant as a "wake-up call" to gamers, Bland says: "You're not outside, trying to think about the game; you are *in* the game. You have to think fast, because you can't sit there and try to outthink the computer."

As Lee says, "It's also an issue of wanting the player to immediately experience that the game functions in *real-time*, which means that you need to react to it and work with the game in real-time mode. In a lot of graphic adventures, you hit a point where you need to make a decision, and you could technically just sit there and think about it for the next hour. We didn't want that kind of a game. This game functions partially like an adventure, and partially like an action game, which means you need to respond; you need to react."

As the first of Cyberdreams' new Genre Series, *Noir* aims to recreate the feel of the great *film-noir* classics Hollywood gave us in the 1940s.

Okay, so you *react*, but do you *interact* in *Angel Devoid*? There certainly seems to be a lot of interactivity. There's an inventory with objects you can use, just like in a traditional graphic adventure. There are also about two dozen characters to talk to, but there are no dialog trees. This is because, as Lee sees it, "Dialog became inconsequential in dialog trees. You just select every piece of dialog until you're done." Instead, Electric Dreams has you enter encounters with an "attitude," such as aggressive or friendly. How you approach characters when you talk to them gives you different results, and you can replay with different attitudes and have quite different encounters altogether. This fits with *Angel*'s branching story lines, with three distinctly different ways to win — and thirty ways to die.



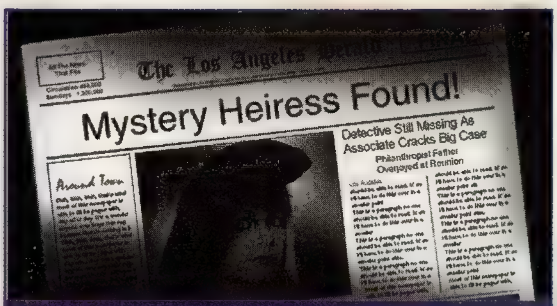
The creators of Cyberdreams' *Noir* used old photographs to create their moody version of 1940s Los Angeles.

Angel Devoid is certainly unusual, not only as a showcase for the TrueMotion technology, but also in its fundamental design. Electric Dreams seems to have worked hard to create a truly unique, truly interactive multimedia experience. The video is not used just because it's *de rigeur*, but it's been seamlessly integrated into actual gameplay. In short, they've done what a lot of game designers who use video forget: they've made a game. Lee makes this clear: "We have no plans of becoming a 'Hollywood' company. We make games, not movies."

In Old L.A. Tonight

One thing we've learned in the years since video first appeared in computer games is that the first title, *Sherlock Holmes Consulting Detective*, was actually pretty darn good. Play was certainly abbreviated, but the simplified interface and use of video pointed to where this sub-category of gaming was going to wind up.

One title that returns to the *SHCD* mold of investigation is Cyberdreams' *Noir*, due this fall. *Noir* is *Consulting Detective* meets Chandler and Hammett: a classic *Maltese Falcon*-style hard-boiled mystery set in 1940s Los Angeles, done entirely in black and white and featuring tough guys, dangerous dames, and plenty of mysteries.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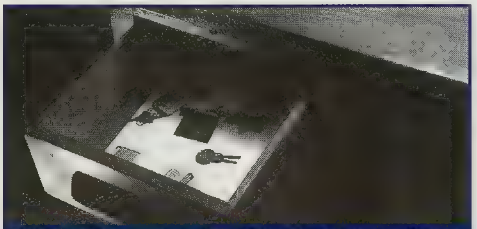
Noir is a hard-boiled detective story that challenges you to investigate several connected mysteries.

In *Noir*, the player portrays a detective investigating the disappearance of another detective named Jack Slayton. The game begins in Jack's office, and the player must go through Jack's files, which contain six open cases he was investigating before he disappeared. These cases include "The Death of Pegasus," involving a murdered race horse; a gangster case called "The Missing Heiress;" "The China Connection," which manages to involve Nazi war production *and* opium dens; and three others. As you investigate these cases, you start to pick up leads and eventually discover that they are all, somehow, connected. The more cases you solve, the closer you get to piecing together a larger mystery, which, of course, involves the disappearance of Jack Slayton.

The project was brought to Cyberdreams by filmmaker Jeff Blyth, director the Disney feature *Cheetah*, as well as the Disney theme parks' CircleVision films, like *American Journeys*, *Wonders of China*, and *From Time to Time*. A computer enthusiast, Blyth created a HyperCard demo for a game based on film-noir: the atmospheric, shadowed crime films of the 1940s, such as *The Postman Always Rings Twice*, *Double Indemnity*, and, of course, *The Maltese Falcon*.

Blyth is designing and shooting all the video elements himself, using a combination of locations, sets, and green-screen footage to recreate LA in the 1940s. The game is being done entirely in black and white to capture the atmosphere of film-noir. There are about 120 locations altogether, completely comprised of photographic backgrounds (more than 600 of them). These photos are being enhanced and woven into an entire game world, with small animations to bring them to life.

The interface is the ultimate in simplicity: one pointer, which changes to indicate "hot spots," or things you can interact with. You can open drawers, pick up items, and travel throughout the city. Once you get an important clue, you're immediately brought to a new location where video clips play as suspects spill their guts. Winning is a matter of visiting the right locations and picking up the proper clues. For example, you find a photo of a mansion in Slayton's drawer, and a taxi or trolley whisks you to that mansion, where you see a clip of a rich old man being grilled. As you visit these locations, they appear on a map in the office, and you can travel back to them at any time.


Noir has the trappings of traditional adventures, like an inventory of items to pick up and use.

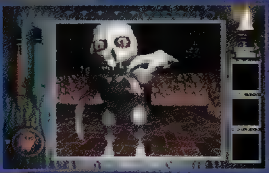
David Mullich, Director of Development for Cyberdreams, describes it as "Unveiling a story that already exists. It's a much simpler interface than a lot of our other projects. We want to eliminate the barrier between the player and the computer as much as possible, and make the player feel as if they really are in this 1940s detective story. We want to create as realistic a feeling as possible, because in film-noir, the atmosphere, the black-and-white, the shadows, the feeling that you're swept up in events that are beyond your control ... these are as much a character as the flesh-and-blood people. All of the visual texture has to be there to create the same experiences. There is always a challenge, when you have prerecorded sequences, to make them interactive, and the way we've done that here is for the cases to overlap and be solved in any order. There are many different paths to travel to discover all the secrets in the game."

Noir is a perfect distillation of the trend to simplify games for a mass audience, and to also provide a more "movie-like" experience. The result is something much closer to television than a game, but it's a form of self-directed television, in which you are given the illusion of control over how the action and story unfolds. It will, undoubtedly, turn off regular gamers as being too passive, but it

The Year In Multimedia

It was the best of years, it was the worst of years. Actually, it was more worst than best, though there were some notable exceptions. It seemed like every publisher was rushing out a title with video in it, not bothering to determine if a) that video was good, or b) the video was necessary. Here a few highlights from 1995:

The Daedalus Encounter


Bloodwings: Pumpkinhead's Revenge

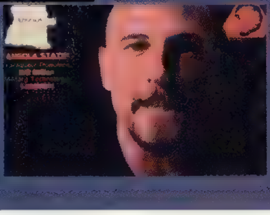
Wing Commander IV

Phantasmagoria

The Last Dynasty

The Last Bounty Hunter

In the First Degree


Command & Conquer

The Daedalus Encounter
Tia Carrere of *Wayne's World* and *True Lies* gave this game some star appeal, but couldn't do much for the thin gameplay.

Bloodwings: Pumpkinhead's Revenge
Based on the movie of the same name (whaddaya mean you've never heard of it?), this mess shoved some of the film's footage onto a CD and strung it together with an appalling *Doom*-clone sorta-shooting game. The nadir of multimedia gaming.

Vortex: Quantum Gate II
Pretentious beyond words. The handsome visuals of *QGII* couldn't make up for its bad plot and grade-school writing.

Wing Commander III& IV
To date, the benchmark for multimedia gaming: space combat linked by slightly interactive movie sequences to give it immediacy. Good acting, good technology.

Phantasmagoria
Lightweight but well done, and not without a few creepy moments, *Phantasmagoria* was the first true graphic adventure to make extensive use of full-motion video.

The Last Dynasty
This convoluted space-adventure game slapped astonishingly bad video into an even worse arcade game.

The Psychotron
About as linear and boring as an "interactive movie" could be.

The Last Bounty Hunter
The latest from American Laser Games: the video is there for shootin' Tex. If you want a story, go buy a novel. Once again, ALG provides some modestly entertaining, mindless fun.

In the First Degree
This is a good concept pretty well executed, but the designers forget one thing: hours of talking heads are boring.

Command & Conquer
A strategy game, this didn't need a multimedia element at all. But Westwood Studios wrapped up the game's real-time battles in a pretty handsome package to provide a sense of drama and continuity. Quite effective.

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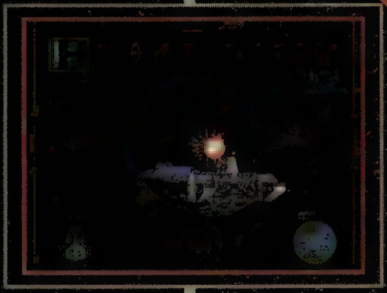

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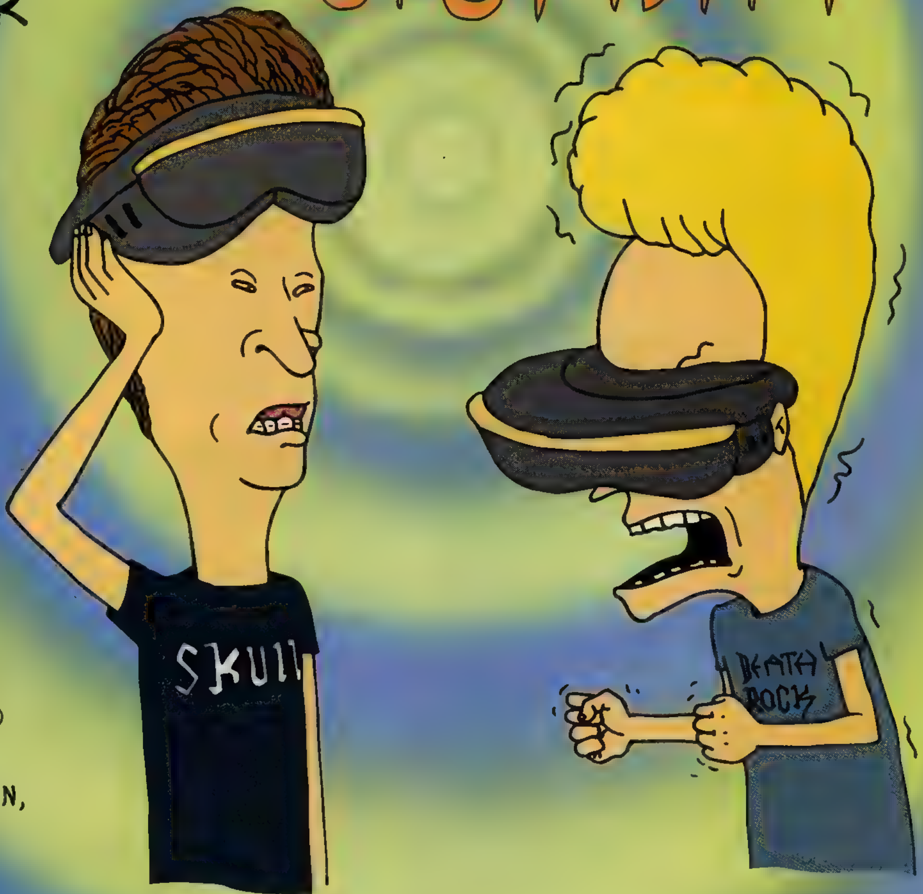

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Product Information Number 176

may also be just what newbies are looking for to ease them into the concepts of interactive entertainment.

The Dream Factory

At the other end of the design spectrum are the projects from CyberFlix, the folks responsible for *Jump Raven, Lunicus, Dust,* and the forthcoming *Titanic*. CyberFlix poses some interesting questions about multimedia: how much character interaction can you expect? Is video really necessary? What makes a virtual world live?

To help provide some of those answers, CyberFlix president Bill Appleton created a fascinating game-authoring tool called DreamFactory. Appleton, the man who created SuperCard for the Mac, wanted to create an integrated set of tools, based on the model of a film studio, that would let non-programmers put together games. These tool include HeadShot for animating talking characters, SoundTrack for audio, CentralCasting for creating characters, PropDepartment to make objects, FlatPaint for backgrounds, SetConstruction for 3D digital sets, MovieEditor to edit real-time animations and mini-movies, and BlueScreen to crunch high-res images down to 8-bit data. What DreamFactory provides is an open-ended, flexible system in which dialog, for instance, can be added or changed easily and at any stage in the prouduction cycle.

CyberFlix used their Dream Factory tools to create an adventure set on the *Titanic*.

The designers of *Titanic* went to great lengths to make sure their reproduction of the ill-fated cruise liner was as accurate as possible.

CyberFlix has been working hard to make DreamFactory more advanced, and they are close to being able to incorporate live-action video into their titles. It's quite an advanced system, as Appleton observes: "There's a big scripting language behind all this, and the characters have their own handler. So every frame, the character wakes up, says I'm here, I'm walking over to the stables, I'm going to feed the horse, and whatever their directions are. Those characters are actually independent entities. That's what we're working on and trying to perfect, and we're doing it to try to get real character interaction and better gameplay."

At this stage, two late 1996 projects are pushing DreamFactory to its limits: the animated pirate musical *Red Jack's Revenge* (which is still under wraps) and *Titanic*. CyberFlix co-founder and lead writer Andrew Nelson is at the helm of *Titanic*, which begins in London about forty years after the famous ocean liner sank, as your character looks back on his life. Nelson wants to raise some questions with this game: "What would happen if I could go back in time and alter some event that was critical in my life? What would happen if you were placed on the *Titanic* as a secret agent, and you either failed or succeeded in performing a mission, and that mission could have prevented World War One from happening, or could have prevented some other historical turning point? One of the things that we wanted to do was the ability to go back and alter history."

In the game, the player is an agent who has to retrieve a series of items while on the *Titanic*. Nelson and his team knew from the start they wanted to create a very realistic virtual *Titanic*, and so they got hold of copies of the original plans for the great vessel. The goal was to give the player a rich environment to explore and provide some sense of what it was like to be aboard the ship. You can take a captain's tour of the ship, or just hang back and listen to the society ladies' gossip, or start trying to unravel the many tricky puzzles to get closer to your goal.

Games like *Titanic* lie in some transitional space between conventional graphic adventures and "multimedia games." But they are, unquestionably, multimedia, even though CyberFlix has strenuously resisted any attempts to go "Sillywood." To Nelson, it's a matter of methods: "Hollywood wants to take its methods and apply them to another."

Appleton concurs: "A company with a lot of money can basically buy Hollywood-level talent and put it on a CD, and it all starts to make a kind of weird sense to them. But not to us, because we know there will never really be anything that interactive with those methods."

New Frontiers?

Three upcoming titles, three completely different approaches to multimedia gaming design. Each game is trying to do something fundamentally different with the same technology, just like everyone else is. We'll have to wait for the finished products before we can tell if they've succeeded; if this business has proved one thing, it's that a game that looks good doesn't necessarily play well, or even play at all.

Craig Alexander, division general manager of Sierra, elaborates on the problem of many games: "The player must be in control at all times and have the ability to interrupt or interact with any video. While much of the same video equipment and technology is used, PC games are not movies. They are diametrically opposite forms of entertainment. Movies are passive: sit back and let the writer and director tell you a story. Computer games are interactive. They require you to think and participate in an environment that the game designer has created."

To ensure games remain interactive, Sierra head Ken Williams instituted a seven-second policy: no video segment can go longer than seven seconds without interactivity.

Video will still be used, but developers will have to work harder on the design end and spend more money. *Wing Commander III* and *Phantasmagoria* proved that the big-budget, big-name title wins. As Activision VP Eric Johnson points out: "There are 3,000 CD-ROMs a year. The top ten titles get the vast majority of the dollars. The only way you're going to get a top ten title is by having production values that are higher than the rest and gameplay that is better than the rest. Unfortunately, the ante is going up. We're in a position where we can afford to do these kinds of projects and do them well, because we've been in business 16 years and we know what good gameplay is. We think that will position us pretty well going forward."

Activision also went Hollywood: they moved to L.A. to have better access to studios and talent for their video.

One thing is certain about all this technology: it's here; it will continue to be an increasing part of games; and it will, ultimately, make games better. If there is a potentially damaging trend we've seen in the past year, it's this homogenization of games: stripped-down, only-slightly-interactive games meant for mass consumption. There's nothing wrong with titles like these: we just have to hope that major publishers don't abandon more sophisticated interactivity in favor of movies-on-CD. A category of entertainment that once challenged you to build a civilization to stand to test of time, or create and run your very own city, could instead leave us all like the laboratory mouse that hits a lever to get a food pellet: click a button, see a movie. Stimulus and response.

After all, they don't call that thing on your desk a mouse for nothing. **PCG**

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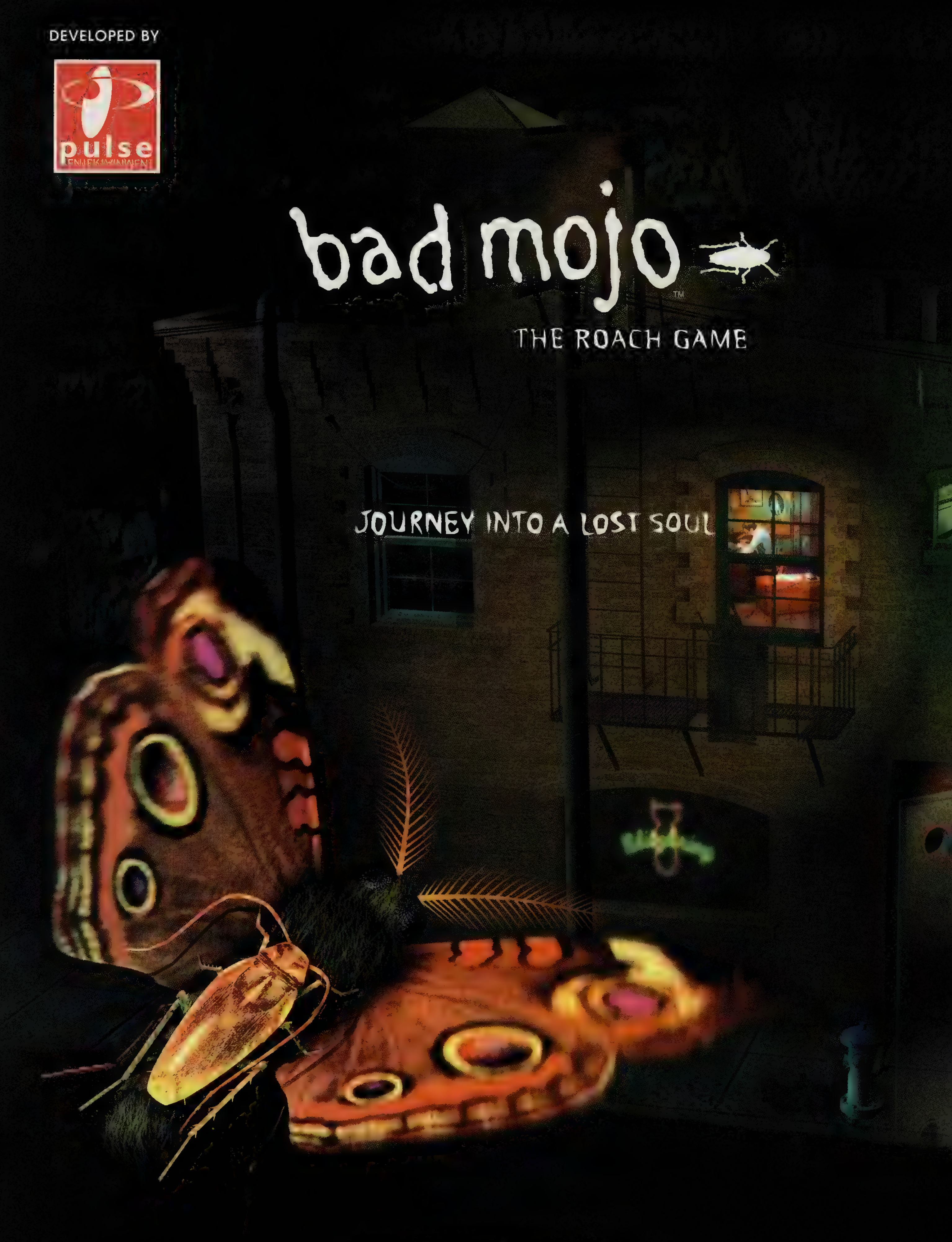
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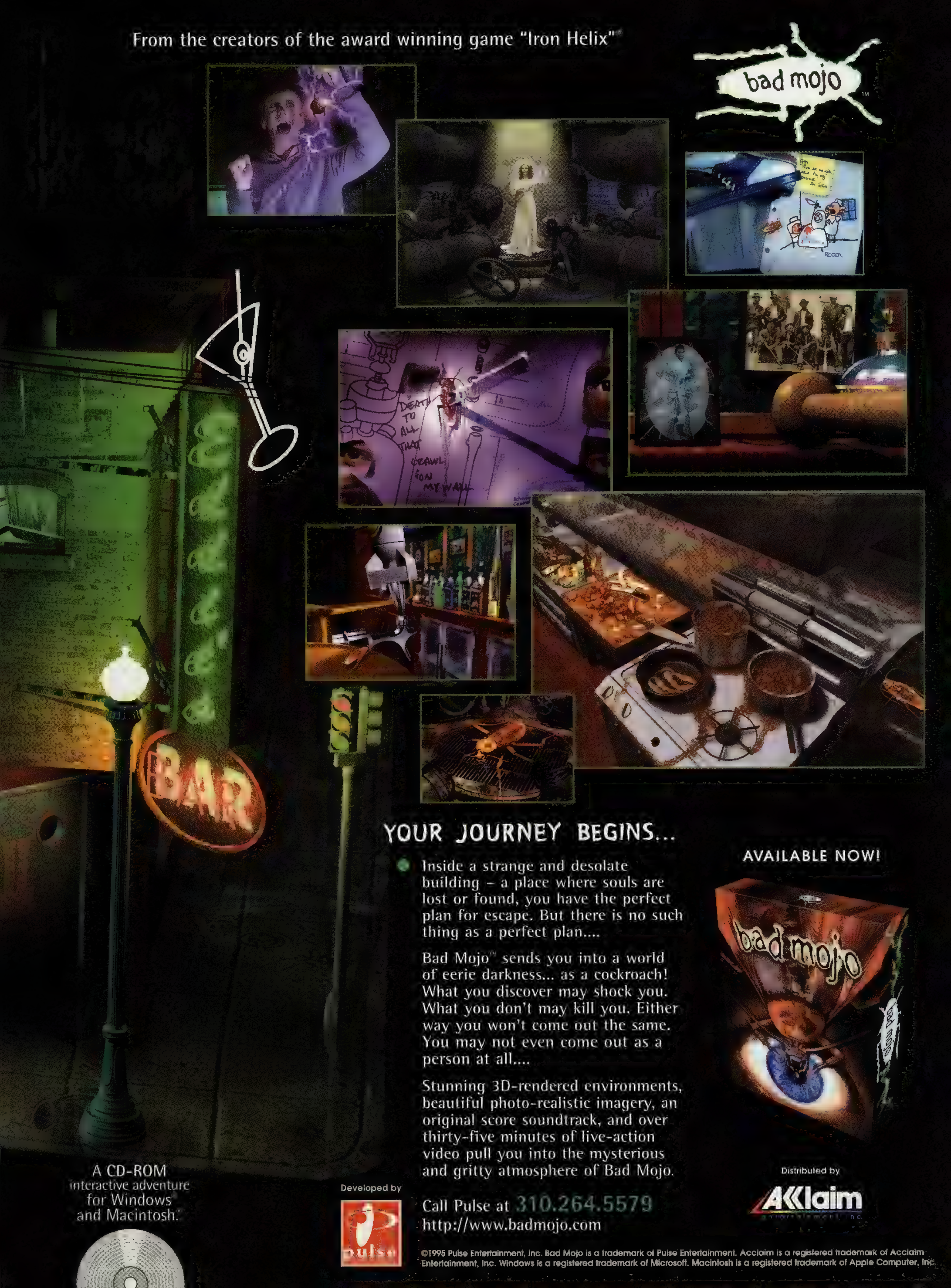
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LIFE IN THE FAST

NEED FOR SPEED
INDYCAR RACING II
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ADI

LANE

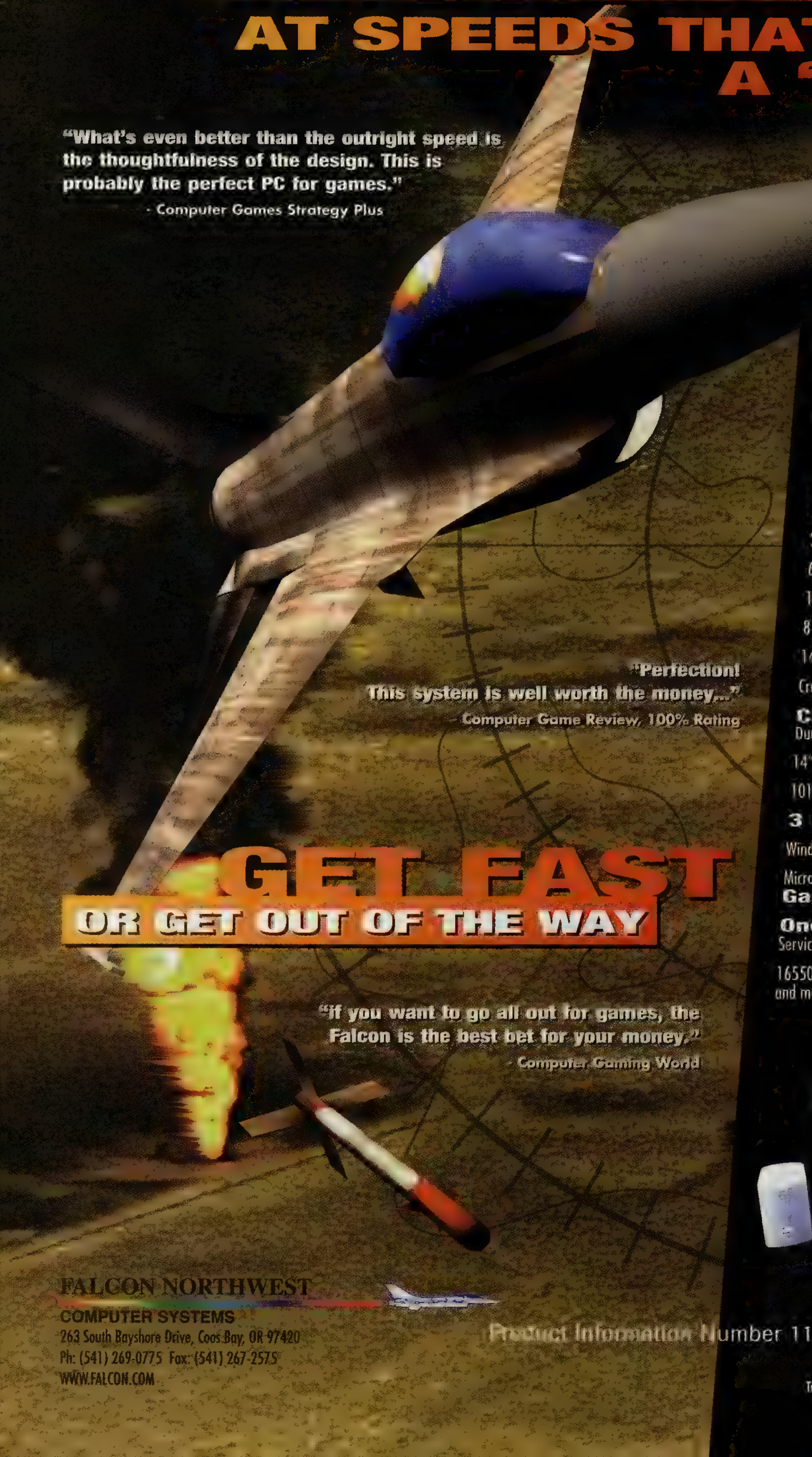
These are fast times for PC racers, with a full field of driving games ready to test your skills behind the wheel.

derby
NASCAR
Racing

By Lee Buchanan

Whatever your taste in digital driving, you'll find something to satisfy your need for speed. You can work for weeks setting up your *IndyCar* racer for 500 miles at Michigan, or you can spend a few minutes smashing the competition in a *Demolition Derby*.

From *NASCAR* to *IndyCar*, from go-karts to demolition derbies, from Mad Max death-races to pure arcade fun, there's something for everyone who loves fun on four wheels. But the computer racing scene hasn't always been so hot. While computer gaming has roared over the past few years, racing games were left in the dust.



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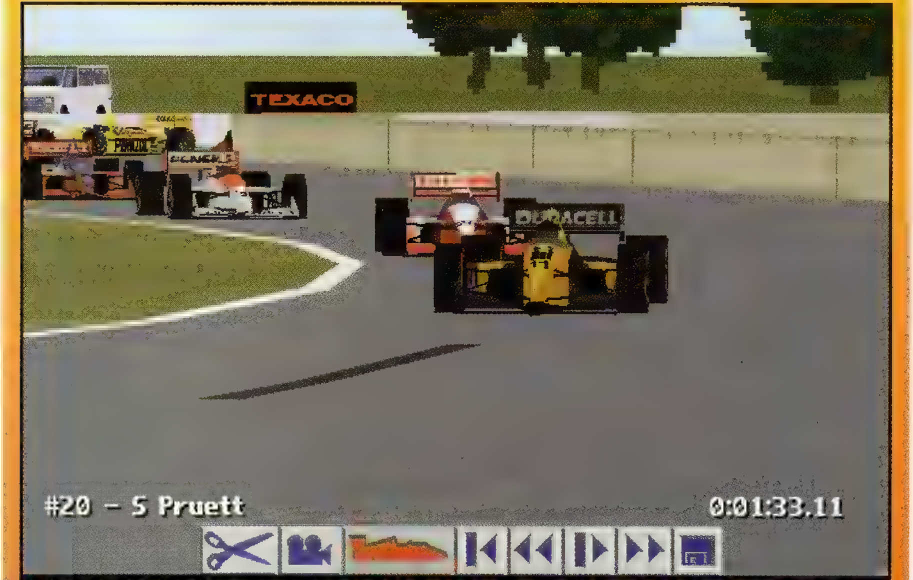
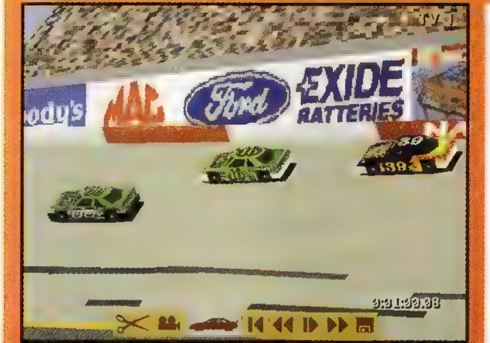
LEADERS OF THE PACK

Say "racing" to a PC gamer, and he'll think Papyrus. The creators of *IndyCar Racing, NASCAR Racing*, and *IndyCar Racing II* have led the new wave of computer racing sims.



IndyCar Racing II easily sets a new standard for racing realism, testing your skills on demanding road courses and high-speed ovals.



NASCAR Racing puts you as close to the real thing as your mama would allow. Racing at Bristol is definitely not just fun and games; and the high-res, Super VGA graphics really put you trackside.

Flight sims, space shoot-'em-ups, strategy games, sports sims — just about every category except racing — dominated game releases. You could use a computer to pilot a 727 from Pittsburgh to Newark or to plant rutabagas on your farm, but if you wanted to go racing, you were out of luck.

IN THE REAR-VIEW

There was a time, back in computer gaming's dim, distant past, when racing was a mainstay. They were crude, of course, but racing games were an important part of the early video and computer games market. The early racing games for the Commodore and Atari systems used flat, bit-mapped graphics and had all the strategy of *Pong*. There were no first-person games; developers apparently didn't notice that *Pole Position* had gamers lining up at the arcade for years.

But racing games faded away just as computer gaming really took off — with a notable exception or two. *World Circuit* by MicroProse was an instant classic. It was a bit arcade-ish to please the hard-core realism crowd — Formula One racing can't be *that* easy — but it sure was fun. Most importantly, *World Circuit* gave you a chance to race for the series championship, running all over the world, from Australia to Detroit, from Monaco to Japan.

World Circuit may have been a little too easy, but it had all the elements real race fans demand in a computer simulation: real tracks, the ability to edit information on drivers and teams, a dash of garage-setup stuff, some pit-stop strategy, and — most importantly — a convincing sensation of speed.

About the same time that *World Circuit* was revving the engines of computer racers, a few developers in Massachusetts were putting their love of racing into a simulation that would put the emphasis on realism. Papyrus released *Indianapolis 500*, a PC conversion of a popular Amiga game, with little fanfare, but the product was just what serious racers were waiting for. There was just one track — Indianapolis' Brickyard itself — but an variety of tracks was about all the game lacked. It had real Indy drivers, real car color schemes, and realistic car performance. And you had to *work* to win, just like the real race teams do. You had to do your time in the garage if you wanted to run up front. You'd adjust tire pressures, camber, tire compounds, shocks, and gearing to shave a few tenths of a second off your lap times. And when you went out on the track, the action was fast and furious, and it just *felt* right.

Indy 500 sold pretty well, and I crossed my fingers and hoped other quality racing sims would quickly follow. No such luck. Another ten or 15 flight sims crowded the software store shelves, but the racing scene remained pretty much in neutral.

There were a couple of ugly disappointments: Mario Andretti's name was on the box of an ambitious sim that tried to track his career in several racing series, from sprint cars to stocks to Indy racers. A great idea, but they couldn't pull it off. The frame rate was choppy, the graphics were unimpressive, and the cars were damned near impossible to control. And Bill Elliott's name was attached to a NASCAR game that thoroughly shamed the sport. I snapped that one up as soon as it appeared in the store, and man, how I tried to love it. It had several tracks and looked like a reasonable attempt to simulate stock car racing, but hours of dedicated gaming could not save this dog. Speaking of dogs, I almost managed to forget *Days of Thunder*, a stock car game that was nearly as ridiculous as the movie that inspired it.

In 1993, racing games shifted gears with the release of *IndyCar Racing* from Papyrus. Here, finally, was a racing sim I could live with — literally. I did little else during the first couple of months after this game came out. Bigger, better, and badder than *Indy 500*, this sim was enough to keep me happy for a while.

There was only one thing wrong with *IndyCar Racing*: it wasn't NASCAR. See, I'm a Southern boy, and though I've seen the world — shoot, I've been to Florida twice — I'm still hooked on beat-'em-up, down-and-dirty stock car racing. NASCAR racing and Harry Gant were on a par with football (Green Bay Packers), college basketball (UNC), and baseball (Atlanta Braves) — and that's saying something. I remember talking to the Papyrus folks about *IndyCar*: "Sure, I love the game. I'm giving it a great rating. But promise me one thing: Do NASCAR next."

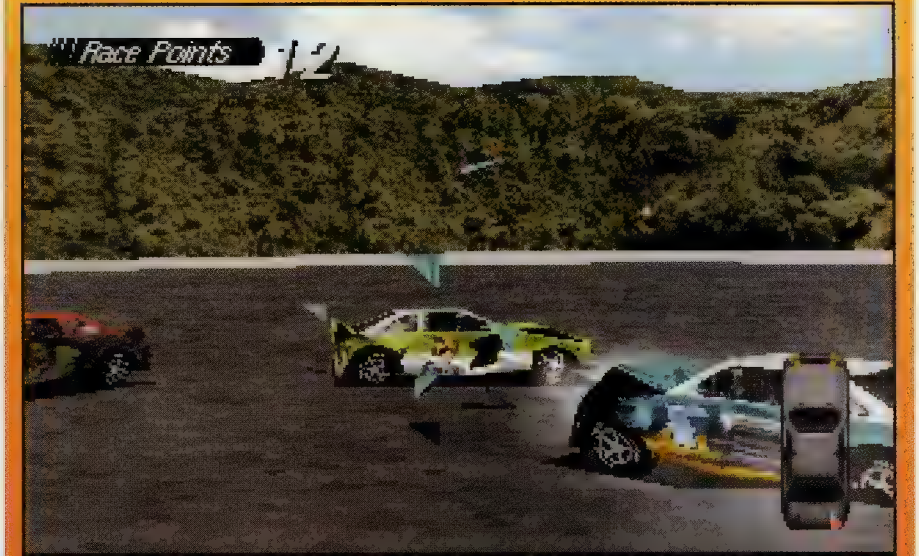
I reasoned that a NASCAR sim as good as *IndyCar Racing* was a natural. NASCAR is easily the fastest-growing motor sport in the world. And unlike Indy — where contact between cars means instant disaster — stock car racing is a full-contact sport. Rubbing fenders is a natural part of racing in the big, heavy stock cars, and that sort of action would make for a kick-ass computer sim.

In 1994, Papyrus answered my prayers and delivered *NASCAR Racing*. From the moment I took my Chevy onto the 36-degree banking at Bristol, I knew this was no simple game; as Ned Jarrett says in the opening credits, "This is NASCAR Racing."

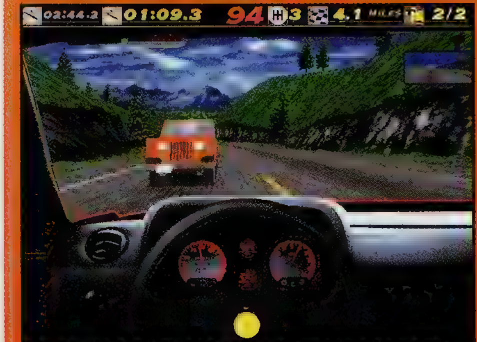
Lots of gamers agreed. Last I heard, *NASCAR Racing* had sold about 400,000 copies worldwide. Sure, NASCAR's exploding popularity with the masses had something to do with the game's success. But it also gave

THRILL RIDES

PC racers can't live by hard-core simulations alone; sometimes, you just want to get behind the wheel and take it to the limit. That's where the more action-oriented games come in.



You might be a little sore the next day after the barely-controlled mayhem of *Destruction Derby*, one of the best of the new generation of arcade driving games.



Electronic Arts' *Need for Speed* combines beautiful high-res graphics with some arcade-style racing in some of the world's greatest muscle cars.

gamers something they wanted.

I know of race fans who saw *NASCAR Racing* on somebody's computer, then went right out and bought a PC just so they could suit up and go racing. Like flying an F-16, racing is something lots of non-gamers have always dreamed about doing. Give them a chance to simulate that experience in a realistic way, and you've got a new gamer.

THE ROAD AHEAD

Nobody could ignore *NASCAR Racing*'s success, so this year software publishers have fallen in line, cranking out driving-oriented games like nobody's business. Except for the Papyrus sims, I can't think of a single racing game that crossed my desk for review in the past couple of years. But in the last few months of 1995, I loaded up six or eight new driving games. Most are arcade games, and some feature cars equipped with lasers and guided missiles, but they all point to the revival of racing as a computer sport.

Not surprisingly, there are only a few winners in this new generation of racing games. Electronic Arts' *Road & Track* magazine license, *Need For Speed*, is a real beauty, letting you wheel hot cars like Ferraris and 'Vettes through town and country scenery that's painted in gorgeous, texture-mapped 3D.

Racing doesn't have to be all business, and the new generation of racing games is nothing but pure fun, including *Need for Speed*, *Screamer*, *Destruction Derby*, *SuperKarts*, *Virtual Karts*, *Fatal Racing*, and *Al Unser Jr. Arcade Racing*. The best of these — *Need for Speed* and *Destruction Derby* — are just plain thrills on wheels. If you're tired of deadly serious racing on the *NASCAR* or *IndyCar* circuits, try smashing cars on purpose in the *Derby*. It's a blast, with crashes and wreckage so realistic it'll have you diving for the floorboard.

SuperKarts takes the go-kart competition by a mile over the newer *Virtual Karts*; the others, including *Screamer* and *Fatal Racing*, are your typical arcade-style driving games, and they don't fare too well against this level of competition. Another class of driving games, including *High Octane* and *Zone Raiders*, puts you at the wheel of futuristic cars to fight it out with various bad guys. It's the stuff of science fiction, but it's still racing.

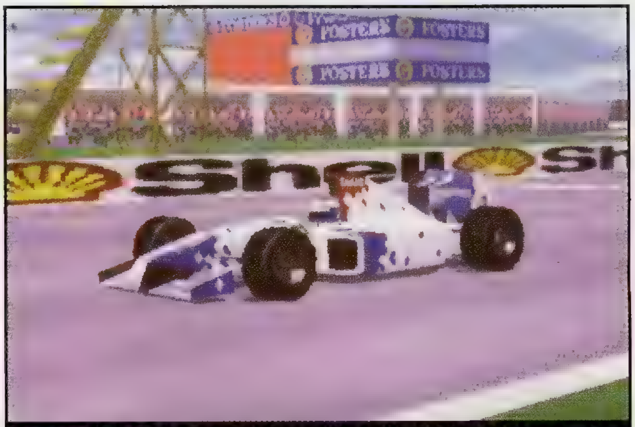
On the sim side, the sequel to *IndyCar* brings all the advances Papyrus made with *NASCAR Racing* into the Indy arena, making *IndyCar Racing II* an instant classic, and a must-have for PC racing fans. Meanwhile, MicroProse developers in the United Kingdom have put the finishing touches on *Gran Prix*, the follow-up to the pioneering *World Circuit*, published by Spectrum HoloByte. With the glamour of Formula One racing done up in SVGA graphics, desktop drivers everywhere are anxiously awaiting this one. Aside from the Spectrum sim, nobody's anxious to take on Papyrus in the racing simulation category, but you can bet somebody will, sooner or later.

BEHIND THE WHEEL

Of course, the latest sims aren't the only new toys to tempt PC racing fans; the increased popularity of these games has driven several companies to make new controllers designed specifically for computerized driving.

Racing champions come in all speeds and sizes, but all of them - from Unser to Earnhardt — would agree on one aspect of high-speed sports: You can't win if you don't have the right equipment. No matter which game you're playing or which joystick you're using, it's better with the real thing — a steering wheel and pedals. You may have gotten pretty fast with a joystick, but switching to the real thing can make an incredible difference. Suddenly, you're no longer playing a game — man, you're *racing*.

I've done extensive testing on four of the best wheel-and-pedals sets available. They all work fundamentally the same way; the steering portion is a racing-style wheel that acts as the X-axis of a standard PC joystick. The pedal units, though different in each product, all use springs and potentiometers to simulate the real thing. All these units can use a single joystick port.



Spectrum HoloByte's *Gran Prix* began life as *World Circuit II*, the sequel to MicroProse UK's critically acclaimed Formula One racing sim.

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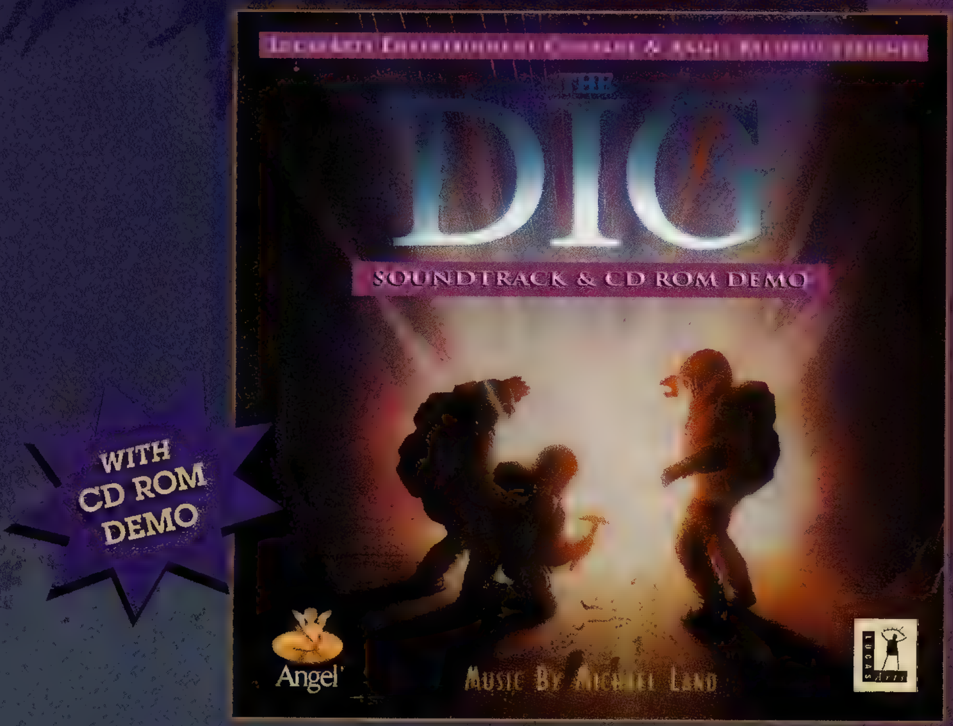
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THE DIG, an epic CD-ROM that's as close to hard-core sci-fi as adventure gamers have seen in a long time. To coincide with the launch of THE DIG gaming package, Angel Records is releasing the soundtrack CD and CD-ROM demo of this highly-anticipated LucasArts venture. With its rich Wagnerian-inspired score, this musical companion piece perfectly captures all the fantastic elements of the game.

Product Information Number 93

The T2 from ThrustMaster is an affordable wheel-and-pedals set.

Formula T2

ThrustMaster
(503) 639-3200
Price: $130

The T2, the second generation of ThrustMaster's wheel and pedals, is the only wheel/pedals set you'll find in retail stores. The T2 is fundamentally identical to the older T1, but a few subtle changes have improved the product significantly.

The slick wheel of the T1 has been covered for a better grip. Gone are the much-criticized roller pedals, replaced by more conventional pedals. The brake pedal is now a bit stiffer than the accelerator, enhancing the realistic feel. Most importantly, clamps have been added to the steering wheel's suction cups, making for a much more stable connection to your computer desk; you won't have to experience the unwanted thrill of the steering wheel breaking loose from the dash while you're whistling around Talladega at 200 mph.

The T2 is constructed mainly of plastic, but that doesn't mean it's not a well-built product. It's a solid unit, although you can't expect the T2 to be as durable as the more expensive wheel-pedal sets.

Steering control isn't as precise as the more expensive sets', either, but the T2 performs acceptably well. And since it's the only mass-produced wheel-pedals set available, the T2 enjoys wide support from game producers.

TSW

The TSW Company
(319) 365-9993
Price: $285 (includes shipping in continental U.S.)

TSW (that stands for The Steering Wheel, in case you were wondering) is a big step up from the T2, both in quality and in price. The TSW wheel and pedal units are built mainly of steel on a wooden base. The unit is backed by a lifetime mechanical warranty.

The wheel clamps securely to a desk, and the wheel itself is textured to provide a firm grip. The pedal unit sits flat on the floor, so you'll need to brace it from behind when you start jamming on the brakes. The TSW also boasts a gear-shift lever built into the base of the wheel unit.

The TSW offers more precise control, from both the wheel and the pedals, than the T2. I tested it with every driving game I could put my hands on, and the TSW calibrated cleanly and ran flawlessly with everything in sight. Of the four products, the TSW alone ran with both wheel and pedals in every game, including the wheel-unfriendly *Need for Speed.*

The TSW strikes a balance between price and durability.

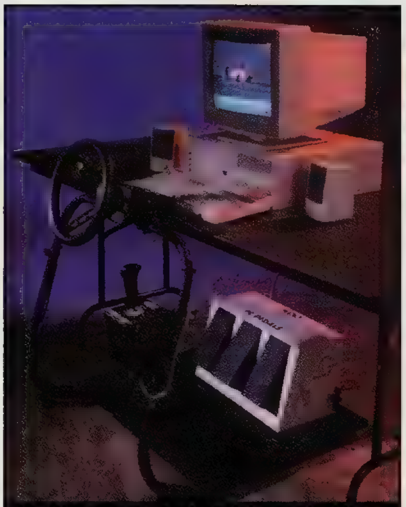
PC Steering Wheel

Interactive Digital Devices
(602) 899-0499
Price: $400

The wheel-and-pedals set from Interactive Digital Devices is a heavy-duty unit for serious racers only. Actually, it's for pilots, too; the IDD pedals also act as flight pedals. Turn a knob on the floor unit, and the gas and brake pedals become rudder pedals.

The IDD unit is actually made up of three separate products that work together or independently. The large base unit has three pedals — that's right, there's a clutch — and includes ports for the steering wheel, a stick shift, and two conventional joysticks. The shifter is optional, but it's the only shifter that approximates the way the real thing works.

The unit is built to last, and boasts the precise control of a quality product. The base unit that holds the pedals seems too large and cumbersome at first, but I enjoyed having the pedals raised to within comfortable reach. The IDD set comes with software that lets you customize its many functions. If you spend as much time in the air as you do on the track, you should take a look at this one.

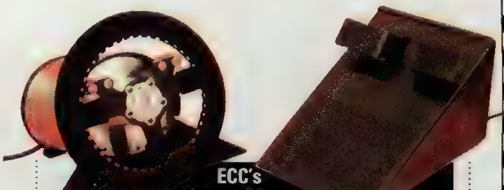


The IDD system's sturdy pedals can double as rudder pedals in flight simulators.

Competition Driving System

Extreme Competition Controls
(612) 824-6733
Price: $495 for wheel and pedals

Extreme Competition Controls makes the Cadillac — better yet, the Ferrari — of driving controllers. How heavy is the steering wheel? Let's just say it has no clamping system to hold it stationary on your desk — and it doesn't need one. The ECC set provides the most accurate control of any driving system I've seen, and that's going up against some stiff competition. The movement of the wheel is fluid, yet solid. Everything about this product feels just right, down to the suede wrap on the steering wheel.



ECC's Competition Driving System is the cream of the crop, but you pay for what you get.

There is no shifter, per se. You configure two of the four buttons on the wheel for shifting up and down. Button shifting may disappoint some purists, but that's the way the Formula One circuit does it. And for control and concentration, it may be the best method for us computer racers, too. There's no fumbling for a button or lever; your thumbs naturally find the buttons as your grip the wheel.

The pedals are built into a heavy, stable triangular box that provides a comfortable platform for braking and accelerating. Precise, comfortable, and solid as a rock, the ECC set is easily the best of the lot. That quality has a price, of course; this beauty sells for $495.

WINNER'S CIRCLE

My recommendation? If you're serious about your driving sims and games, your owe it to yourself to get a wheel-and-pedals set. Now which one of these products should you buy? That depends almost entirely on how much money you can spend. None of these sets really competes with the others, because they're all at significantly different prices. The ECC wheel is roughly three times the cost of the Thrustmaster. Is it three times better? At least. Can you afford it? That's none of my business.

Durability should be factor in your decision. Intense racing means a lot of wear and tear on the wheel and pedals, and price is a pretty good indication of how much abuse these controllers can take. Don't expect the Thrustmaster T2 to last as long as the ECC or the IDD units.

If you can afford the best, go with the ECC — you won't be disappointed. It was the one that went back up on my desk when I'd finished testing the others.

If you absolutely cannot justify spending more than $130 or $140, don't be at all afraid to buy the Thrustmaster T2. It's not quite as precise or solid-feeling as the other products, but the T2 is still a giant leap ahead of a joystick when it comes to driving sims and games.

The TSW might be your best bet for a compromise between quality and price. It doesn't have the mass-production sheen of the T2 or the money-is-no-object craftsmanship of the ECC, but it's an affordable alternative that is solid, durable, and precise. TSW also was voted the Wheel Most Likely to Work in Any Game, surprisingly edging out the T2. PCG

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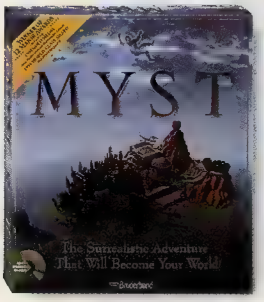

Myst
Interact. Game 5004304
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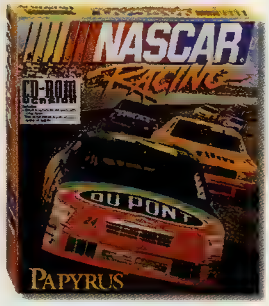

Nascar Racing
Driving Sim. 5001300
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Doom II
Arcade Style 5021506
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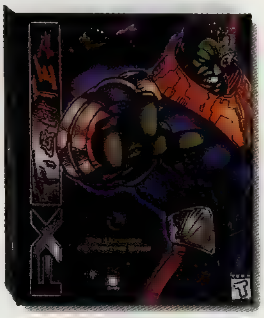

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MAC LCIII 4mb

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Children's Ed. 5025309
WIN3.1 386/25 4mb M
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Computer Tutor. 5032404
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Historical 5020003
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Music 5031406
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Sports Illustrated Multimedia Almanac
Sports 5036504
WIN3.1 386/25 4mb M
MAC MACII

And More Calendars
Home/Personal 5049507
WIN3.1 386 4mb M P
MAC LCII K

808 Great Letters
Gen. Reference 5041702
WIN3.1 386 4mb M

Instant Internet Access
Internet Guide 5031000
WIN3.1 386 4mb M

AAA Trip Planner
Travel 5011606
WIN3.1 386 4mb M P

Zig Zag
Strategy Game 5050109
WIN3.1 386/25 4mb M
MAC LCII

How To Select CD-ROMs For Your System.

WIN3.1 386 4mb M J
MAC LCIII K P
SYSTEM CPU RAM PERIPH.

SYSTEM Button indicates the available operating environment(s) for a given selection: DOS (for PC), WIN 3.1 (for PC), MAC for Macintosh.

CPU Button indicates the *minimum* processor required. If a title is available in PC and Macintosh formats, the top half of this button represents PC system requirements and the bottom half represents Macintosh system requirements. Note: Ser.=Series, Class.=Classic, Pent.=Pentium. For Mac – LC series includes LC 475, Performa 475, Quadra, Centris, Powerbook 180C, IIFX or better.

RAM Button indicates the *minimum* amount of RAM required.

PERIPHERALS Button indicates required peripherals. M=mouse, J=joystick, K=keyboard, P=printer.

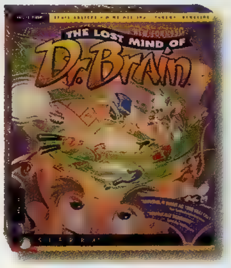
For all titles, the *minimum* system requirements recommended (unless otherwise indicated) are: Hardware: SVGA monitor (256 colors), sound card, 40MB hard drive, double speed CD-ROM drive. Operating System: DOS 5.0, Windows 3.1, Macintosh System 7.0.

The Complete Bartender Guide
Gen. Interest 5034103
WIN3.1 386 2mb M
MAC CLASS.

How Multimedia Computers Work
General Ref. 5044300
WIN3.1 386/33 4mb M

Infopedia
Encyclopedia 5034004
WIN3.1 486/25 4mb M

Campaigns, Candidates And The Presidency
Historical 5042700
WIN3.1 386/33 4mb M
MAC LCII



The Lost Mind Of Dr. Brain
Children's Ed. 5037502
WIN3.1 486 4mb M
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K

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Adventure 5040605
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J K

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Children's Ed. 5033006
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Mayo Clinic Family Health Book
Medical Ref. 5036900
WIN3.1 386/33 8mb M
MAC LCIII 5mb

Superkarts
Arcade Style 5040704
DOS 386/33 4mb M
J K

The Random House Kid's Encyclopedia
Children's Ed. 5027909
WIN3.1 486 4mb M

Adventures With Oslo
Children's Ed. 5049309
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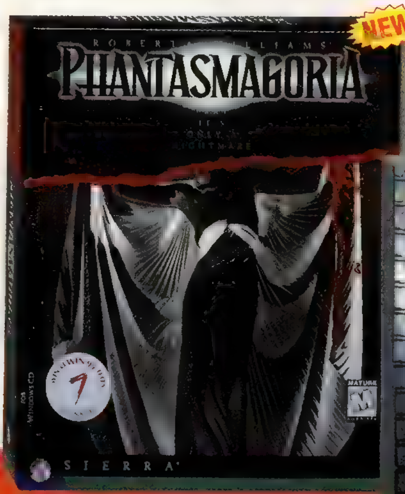
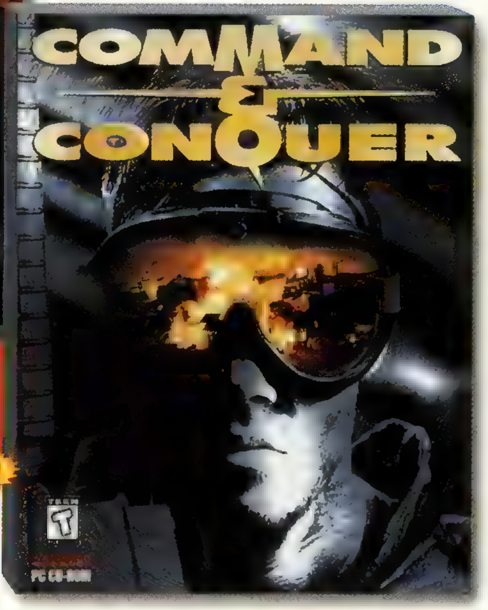


NEW

Phantasmagoria
Adventure 5004502
WIN3.1 486/66 8mb M
DOS



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Role Play. Game 5029806
DOS 386/40 4mb M
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Beer Hunter
Gen. Interest 5040803
WIN3.1 486 4mb M
MAC LCIII

Bodyworks Voyager
Medical Ref. 5009709
WIN3.1 386 4mb M P

Trivial Pursuit
Strategy Game 5027404
WIN3.1 386 4mb M
MAC LCIII

Microsoft Bookshelf
Gen. Reference 5009402
WIN3.1 386 4mb M
MAC LCII K

Woodruff And The Schnibble
Adventure 5037304
WIN3.1 486 4mb M

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The Greatest Paper Airplanes NEW
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Historical 5044102
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Astronomica
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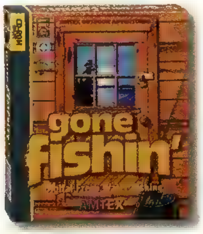
WIN3.1 486 4mb M
MAC LCIII



Gone Fishin'
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DOS 386 4mb M
MAC LC 8mb

Arts and Letters Draw NEW
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Illustrative Talking Encyclopedia For Children
Children's Ed. 5045802
WIN3.1 386 4mb M

Shoot Video Like A Pro
Home/Personal 5043104
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Gaming in the 3rd Dimension

PART TWO

Last month, Charles told us what 3D video is all about, and how it'll change gaming. Now, in Part Two, he'll help you decide *which* 3D accelerator card is right for you.

by Charles Brannon

I hope you read Part One of this series in the January issue, which explained how 3D works and introduced you to the terminology of 3D graphics for gaming. Because this month I'm going to tell you as much as I can about the 3D cards available today — or at least as much as anyone can tell this early in the game.

See, one big, important ingredient in the 3D recipe still isn't in place: Microsoft's Direct3D, an operating system-level standard that, it's hoped, will allow game designers to write 3D game features that will work with *any* video card that supports Direct3D. And until that happens, the performance of any given 3D game on any card will depend on whether or not the game was written *for that card*. In other words, there's no standard yet — and no meaningful benchmark.

So what I've done here is to give you as much info as possible on each of the four cards discussed. The charts in this feature will let you readily compare just about every feature relevant to video performance, so you can see how the cards stack up.

I've also included hands-on, kind of gut reactions to each card — the installation process, the software that ships with them, and how the games looked. Until Microsoft finishes the Games SDK and Direct3D, these may be the only useful comparison stats.

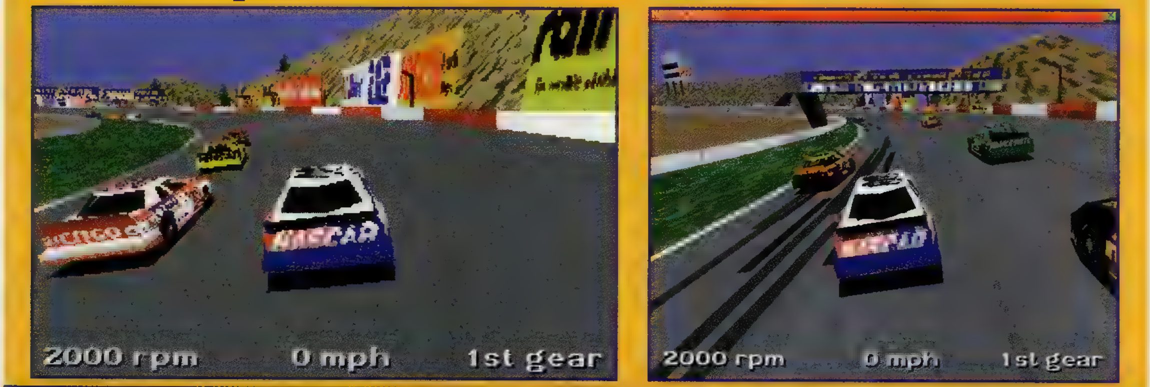
One thing's for sure, though: Direct3D is on the way, and this category is going to take off. Already, cards from leading video companies like ATI and Number Nine are on the horizon, and the end is nowhere in sight. 3D video is coming — not as fast as we'd hoped, but still coming.

Creative Labs 3D Blaster

The 3D Blaster is a full size VESA local bus card using a special games version of the 3Dlabs GLint chip, which was originally designed for high-end graphics workstations. It is an upgrade board, meaning that you keep your existing VGA graphics card. A special loop-back (or pass-through) cable connects between your VGA card and the 3D Blaster, and your monitor is connected to the 3D Blaster. When booting your machine or running standard DOS games, your VGA card is in control. The 3D Blaster takes over when running DOS games designed for the 3D Blaster, and it can take over from your VGA card for Windows graphics acceleration.

Installing the board is easy, as long as you have a free VESA local bus slot. Open up your case and double-check before you buy; one system I tried had two VL-bus slots, but one was occupied by the existing VGA card (which must be retained) and the other by a local-bus hard disk controller. I could have replaced the VL-bus VGA card with an standard 16-bit ISA card, but that's hardly a cost-

3D Graphics Cards — Before and After



Without 3D acceleration, *NASCAR Racing* takes some real processing muscle; unless you've got a fast Pentium, you'll have to run it at 320x200 resolution with minimal texture mapping (left) to get really smooth animation. But a good 3D accelerator will let you have 640x480 resolution and detailed texture maps without a processor upgrade.

effective fix. Another thing to be aware of is that some motherboards also use on-board video controllers that don't take up a slot.

As I said, actually installing the board is easy — although not quite foolproof. When connecting the pass-through cable from the VGA card, I was uncertain which socket to use on the 3D Blaster, since the ports were not marked on the card. Turning to the manual helped, naturally, and after closing the case, the machine booted right up.

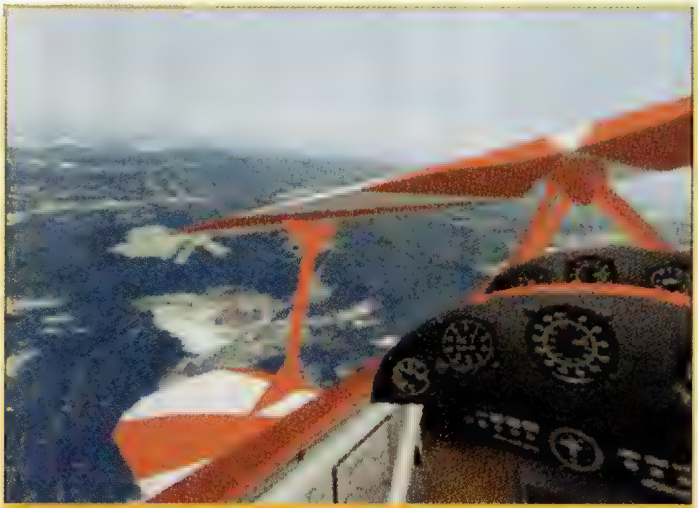
But after the fact, I spotted a line that instructed me to install the Windows 95 driver (a Windows 3.1 driver is also provided) *before* inserting the card. This updates the Windows 95 plug and play system to detect and configure the 3D Blaster — so off came the case, I yanked the 3D Blaster out, then installed the driver. When I reinstalled the card, Windows 95 did indeed automatically detect the 3D Blaster, and it prompted me for the driver diskette, which installed without a hitch.

The first thing I noticed is that the 3D Blaster is a pretty zippy 2D graphics card for Windows. But when I compared its graphics benchmark to the existing video card, a Diamond Stealth 64 DRAM, it turned out to be about 30% slower than the Stealth. I chose to reinstall the Stealth's S32 video driver to regain my original speed, although Creative Labs informed me that the next version of their driver would be about 20% faster.

The games included with the 3D Blaster — and designed to take advantage of its features — are gorgeous (see the screen shot at right), and give you an idea of what's possible when game designers directly support the card's features. The non-accelerated versions of these games run well on a 486 at 320x200 resolution and with less texture mapped detail. But adding the graphics accelerator lets you boost the resolution to 640x480 and crank up the detail with more texture maps on the same 486 without taking a hit in the performance arena.

Even a Pentium machine can't update its screen as fast as a 486DX2 can with a 3D Blaster installed, so the $350 seems well spent. True, the same money could buy you another four megabytes of RAM, or a bigger and faster hard drive, or a CPU upgrade, but none of these things will make as big a difference for 3D gaming as the 3D Blaster.

Only the VL-bus version of the 3D Blaster was available at the time of this writing, although Creative Labs expects to ship the PCI version sometime this Spring. The PCI version of the 3D Blaster is based on an entirely different (and much better) chip made by Rendition, Inc. It's also planned as an upgrade board that attaches via a loop-



The 3D Blaster version of *Flight Unlimited* looks incredible, and it'll run with a very smooth frame rate — even on a 486-based system.

3D GRAPHICS CARDS	**Creative Labs 3D Blaster**	**Diamond Edge 3D**	**Matrox MGA Millenium**	**Philips Tasmania 3D**
Minimum end-user computer configuration?	486 DX2-66 VLB (4 MB RAM)	Pentium or DX4 PCI running Windows 95 (8 MB RAM)	486DX PCI (8MB RAM)	486 DX (PCI) Pentium recommended
Video card configurations	2 MB (1 MB DRAM/1 MB VRAM)	2120XL: 1MB DRAM 2200XL: 2MB DRAM 3240XL: 2MB DRAM +2MB VRAM 3400XL: 4MB VRAM	2MB WRAM and 4MB WRAM	2MB DRAM
Estimated pricing for each configuration	$349	$299 (2120XL); $359 (2200XL); $479 (3240XL); $649 (3400XL)	$329 (2MB) ; $489 (4MB)	$250
Upgradable to how much video RAM?	4MB	4MB	2MB board upgradable to 4MB or 8MB; 4 MB board upgradable to 8 MB	N/A (Not upgradable)
Cost of upgrade?	To be determined	$80 (1MB DRAM) $199 (2MB VRAM)	$219 (2MB); $399 (4MB); $569 (6MB)	N/A
Accessories (daughterboards, joysticks) available and at what price?	Digital Game Pad (Pricing TBD)	Sega Saturn Control Pads ($39 for two)	Live video/capture daughter card (MediaXL $249); Live video and MPEG (Medial XL-MPEG $349); TV Tuner (Media TV) $179	N/A
3D games included	DOS Games: *Rebel Moon, Flight Unlimited, Magic Carpet Plus, Nascar Racing, High Octane*	Windows 95 Games: *Virtua Fighter Remix, NASCAR Racing, Descent, Destination Saturn*	DOS: *NASCAR Racing*	DOS: *FX Fighter, Tank Commander*
3D Applications included	None	None	Asymetrix 3D F/X	None
3D titles available by the end of first quarter 1996	25 to 30 titles	35 3D specific titles	None planned	10 to 15 titles
Commitment for support from how many game developers?	More than 200	More than 40	Unknown	TBD
Windows 3.1 / Windows 95 driver?	Yes / Yes	No / Yes	Yes / Yes	N/A
Supported by which industry APIs (Application Programming Interfaces)?	RenderWare, Brender, Reality Lab, 3DR, Direct3D	All Microsoft DirectX APIs and Reality Lab; others TBD	RenderWare, Brender, Reality Lab, 3DR, Direct3D	RenderWare, Brender, Reality Lab, 3DR, Direct3D
Stand-alone display card or video pass-through?	Pass-through	Stand-alone	Stand-alone	Pass-through
Sound support	None	16 bit, 48 KHz stereo; 32 voice wavetable and General MIDI	None	None

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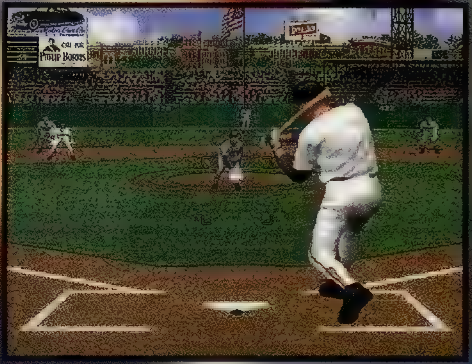

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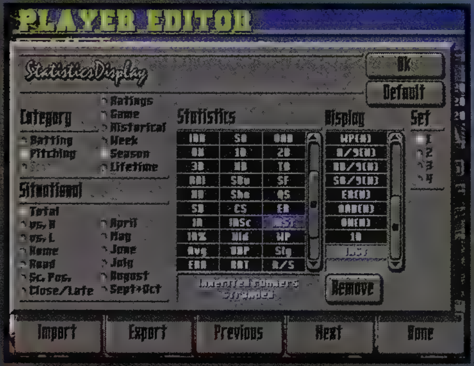
PLAYER EDITOR
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Road
Sc. Pos.
Close/Late
April
May
June
July
August
Sept+Oct
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Done

Our complete "stats construction set" instantly puts every stat and rating under the sun at your fingertips. Create unlimited custom stats displays for the ultimate managerial thrill!

PC CD-ROM
PlayStation™

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Product Information Number 85

back cable.

Creative Labs has long enjoyed its status as the standard for PC sound, and is determined to extend its hegemony into the 3D arena. To this end, Creative has signed up over 200 game developers to produce titles for the 3D Blaster, which should ensure a healthy supply of new titles supporting their card. This is crucial right now, since there is as yet no true standard for 3D — at least until Microsoft releases the Direct3D software development kit (SDK) later this year. When that happens, it won't matter quite as much whose board you buy, as long as it's supported by Direct3D.

Philips Tasmania 3D

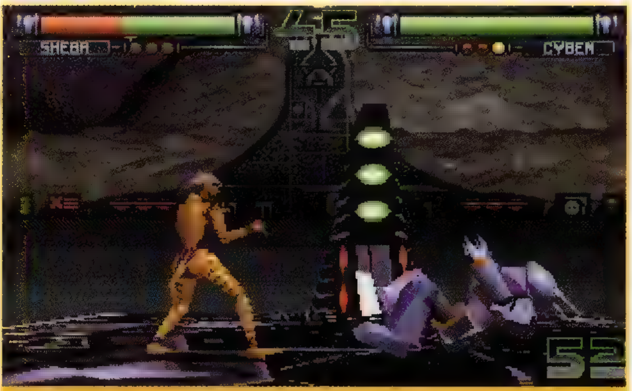
The Tasmania 3D is a PCI card that, like the 3D Blaster, attaches to your existing VGA card with a pass-through cable. Rather than replacing the video display, the Tasmania is designed to overlay its 3D graphics on top of the 2D graphics drawn by your existing VGA card. The advantage is that you don't have to remove and discard (or try to sell) your current VGA card. This is particularly important for Pentium PCI systems, which typically ship with a fast accelerated graphics card.

Unlike the 3D Blaster, the Tasmania does not include any Windows drivers. This lets you continue to use your presumably reliable drivers for Windows rather than struggling with the initial, often buggy, release of a new video card driver. However, if you're not thrilled with the performance of your current graphics card, the Tasmania won't do anything at all to improve your system except when running 3D games designed specifically for the Tasmania card.

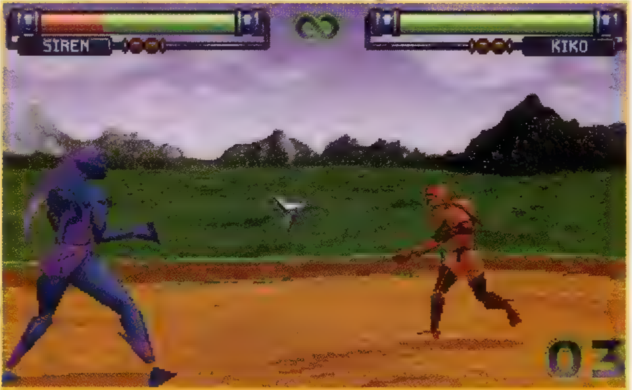
On the other hand, it won't degrade the quality of your display, since it can pass through unchanged video resolutions as high as 1600 x 1200 at frequencies as high as 85 hertz. I did notice a barely perceptible shadow on some high-contrast (black on white) regions of the screen, however.

The other advantage of the Tasmania 3D is its low cost, which is $50 to $100 less than any of its current competitors. Although the Tasmania card is bundled with two excellent (even stunning) 3D titles, its usefulness seems less clear.

Again, the success of the Tasmania will initially depend on Philips' ability to convince DOS game developers to write specific versions of their games for the card. When Direct3D becomes the standard within a year, this won't be nearly as important.



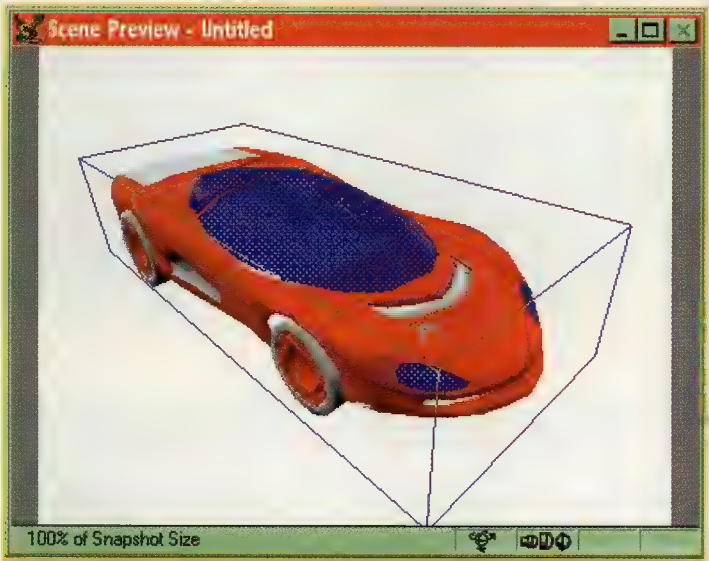
FX Fighter, an outstanding 3D fighting game, is being bundled with the Philips Tasmania 3D graphics card.



The graphics in *FX Fighter* show a marked improvement when the Philips Tasmania 3D graphics card is being used.

3D HARDWARE FEATURES	Creative Labs 3D Blaster	Diamond Edge 3D	Matrox MGA Millenium	Philips Tasmania 3D
3D chipset and bus technology (VLB/PCI)	3Dlabs Games GLint (VLB)	Nvidia ST62000 and NV1 (PCI)	MGA-2064W (PCI)	Yamaha RPAZ (PCI)
3D technology used	Polygon renderer	Polygon rendering and quadratic texture mapping	Polygon renderer	Polygon renderer
Onboard geometry processing?	No	No	No	No
Antialiased output?	Yes	No	No	No
Texture mapping? Forward or inverse?	Inverse	Forward	Inverse (via software)	Inverse
Video texture mapping?	Yes	Yes	No	No
MIP mapping: bilinear filtering?	No	No	No	No
MIP mapping: trilinear filtering?	No	No	No	No
Alpha blending (transparency)?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Hardware z-buffering?	Yes (16-bit)	No	Yes	Yes
Fogging?	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Perspective correction? Method?	Yes (Per Pixel Divide)	Yes (Texture warping)	No	No
Other special/competitive 3D features		Reflection mapping/ lighting effects	Hardware Gouraud shading	

3D PERFORMANCE	Creative Labs 3D Blaster	Diamond Edge 3D	Matrox MGA Millenium	Philips Tasmania 3D
Number of 50-pixel, perspective-correct (if applicable), textured polygons per second at 640x480, 16bpp (HiColor)	200,000 (On DX4)	300,000 (depends on processor speed)	190,000	150,000 (Pentium 100)
Pixel / Texel fill rate? (640x480 16-bit)	25 million pixels/second; 12 million texels/second	100 million pixels/second; 10 million texels/second	2.4 billion pixels/second; estimated 5 million texels/second (Pentium 100)	7.5 million texels/second
Estimated frames per second	15 to 25 fps	30 fps	20 to 25 fps	20 to 30 fps



The Matrox Millenium is one of the costlier boards in this review, but it's the only one that includes a powerful 3D graphics editor.

Quick Access
1
2
3
4

The Millenium includes PowerDesk drivers that let you switch between Windows screen resolutions and zoom in on the fly.

Matrox MGA Millenium

Unlike the 3D Blaster or the Tasmania 3D, the Matrox Millenium was designed to be a high-end replacement for your current graphics card. Matrox claims that the Millenium is the king of the hill when it comes to Windows graphics acceleration, and my testing confirms that it's between 15% to 33% faster than the previous champion, the Diamond Stealth 64 VRAM. One reason is the use of WRAM (Windowed RAM), which is superior to even VRAM, which is in turn faster than DRAM. Both WRAM and VRAM are dual-ported memory, meaning that the memory can be accessed by both the CPU and the video card at the same time, but WRAM edges out VRAM due to a more efficient design with lower latency and shorter circuit paths.

Ironically, the Millenium was never intended as a game graphics board. When I spoke with Caroline DeBie of Matrox, she told me, "The Millennium was the first mainstream product to really answer all the PC user's needs: video, 2D, 3D, and DOS, all in one board. And that's why it's been so popular on the gaming side, because its DOS performance is really high, as well as its Windows and video performance. For today's gamers, for those who use today's applications, it's a very good solution, and it's been doing very well, even with OEMs who cater to the gaming industry."

Why is the board's DOS performance so good, when many other accelerated boards have such lackluster speed when running DOS games? Says DeBie, "In our previous products we had very slow DOS performance. We'd incorporated an 8-bit data channel in our [VGA] core, meaning that the path for the DOS or VESA applications was very small. So in order to get rid of that weakness, we incorporated a 32-bit VGA core in our new chip, which means the data path for the DOS application is larger than most other chips on the market. Most chips usually have a 16-bit VGA core. We were also one of the first boards to have VESA 2.0 support — the new standards for DOS applications, which allows better performance and higher resolution under DOS."

While the 3D features of the chip are compelling (for example, it supports hardware-accelerated Gouraud shading, a feature not included with the other cards), the Millenium doesn't have true hardware-accelerated texture-mapping. And Matrox ships only one game with the card — *NASCAR Racing*, which has been programmed to take advantage of the card's features. And although Matrox supports all industry APIs, it's not clear which game developers will support Matrox.

So is the Millenium a good choice for gamers, or only for those who want fast Windows graphics first, and fast games secondarily? Says DeBie, "The Millennium was not designed to do fast perspective-correct texture mapping, but we don't know whether the games coming out will take full advantage of what other hardware might support. So we don't know if we'll be at a disadvantage — but we want our users to know they'll have to keep that in mind."

One of the strengths of the Matrox Millenium is excellent motion-video play-

DISPLAY CARD FEATURES	Creative Labs 3D Blaster	Diamond Edge 3D	Matrox MGA Millenium	Philips Tasmania 3D
Highest 2D resolution supported with 2MB video card RAM / 4MB RAM	1024 x 768 / 1280 x 1024	1280 x 1024 (DRAM); 1600 x 1200 (VRAM)	1600 x 1200	N/A (No 2D support)
Highest 3D graphics resolution supported with 2 MB RAM / 4MB RAM (16 bit color)	640 x 480	Same as 2D (but typically 640 x 400 or 640 x 480)	640 x 480 (2 MB); 800 x 600 (4 MB); 1280x1024 (8 MB)	800 x 600 (16-bit), but typically 640 x 480
Highest refresh rate supported? (MHz)	72 Hz	120 Hz	200 Hz	Passes through up to 85 Hz
2D Windows acceleration?	Yes	Yes, including 32-bit TrueColor (1 billion colors)	Yes	No (Supports existing video card)
DCI / DirectDraw support?	Yes / Yes	Available first quarter '96	Yes	Available first quarter '96
Super VGA compatible core (in hardware) for DOS games?	No	Yes	Yes	No

MOTION VIDEO FEATURES	Creative Labs 3D Blaster	Diamond Edge 3D	Matrox MGA Millenium	Philips Tasmania 3D
YUV->RGB colorspace conversion?	No	No	Yes	No
Scaling?	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Interpolation?	No	Yes	Yes	No
Antialiasing/smoothing?	Yes	Yes	No	No
MPEG playback (DX2-66 or better)	Software	Software	Software; Hardware option	No

GASOLINE
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Who Needs a Saturn?

TIME
JACKY
08 96
SARAH
WINNER
TIME
JACKY
04 20
SARAH
REPLAY

Virtua Fighter is an example of a game that wouldn't be nearly as impressive without graphics acceleration. Nvidia claims this game couldn't be supported on the PC with anything less than the concurrent acceleration provided by their NV1 chip.

back. The hardware features are a perfect match for software-assisted MPEG playback, and you can add true hardware MPEG support via a relatively inexpensive daughterboard. The MPEG board also features live video overlay and capture, which is also available in a cheaper add-on without hardware MPEG playback. (Software MPEG playback is also supported with the Diamond Edge and 3D Blaster, but due to their lack of YUV-RGB translation, results will vary depending on CPU speed.)

Matrox was also the first graphics company to release its own optimized DirectDraw drivers, an essential requirement for fast Windows 95 2D games. With games that use 2D graphics more than 3D, the very high speed of the Matrox card will work in its favor. Another reason we included the Millenium in our comparison is that its price compares favorably to those of the the other boards, despite its professional capabilities.

Diamond Edge 3D

The Diamond Edge series is available in a variety of configurations, some using standard DRAM, some using VRAM, and some with a mix of both types. The VRAM versions use the Nvidia NV1 chip, and the DRAM versions use the SGS-Thompson ST6000 (which is equivalent).

The Edge board replaces your current video card, and as a Windows accelerator, the Edge 3400XL performs almost as well as its cousin, the Stealth 64 VRAM — at least according to my benchmarks. The card also sports a digital/analog joystick port, microphone, audio-in and audio-out jacks.

You will, however, need an available slot on the back of your machine to mount the accessory bracket that contains the two Sega Saturn-compatible gamepad ports. These gamepads (available separately) are essential if you want to make the most of the games that Sega is busy porting from the Saturn to the Nvidia chip. (The Jazz 3D Magic is another vendor of NV1-based graphics cards, featuring an optional TV-output card for big-screen gameplay.)

The Edge also includes a built-in sound card supporting high-quality 16-bit sound effects, plus MPU-401 compatible wavetable MIDI. Diamond recommends you use it in a system with an existing sound card, because the Edge audio is not accessible from DOS games, and there's no Sound Blaster-compatible interface (not surprising, given the rivalry developing between Creative and Diamond). Hookup is easy: just run the included cable between the line-out jack of the Edge to the line-in jack of your other sound card.

But you don't need another sound card if you're only interested in applications and games for Windows 95; all the Edge games require that operating system, and the Windows 95 audio driver works well. (Diamond has no plans to support the Edge with DOS, Windows 3.1, or OS/2.) I can report that running these games was a pleasure, thanks to Windows 95's AutoPlay feature; you simply insert a CD, the game starts up, and you're ready to play. The games automatically switch to 640x400 mode for fast graphics, then restore your previous video mode settings when the game ends.

PCG

GRAPHICS TERMINOLOGY

Alpha blending — The use of a special transparent color to reveal the underlying objects. Useful for depicting windows, holes, etc.

Antialiasing — Also referred to as smoothing; a method that averages surrounding pixels in order to minimize jagged diagonal edges in a scene.

Bilinear filtering — When painting each pixel of a polygon, the pixel is projected onto the underlying texture map, then averaged with adjacent pixels to provide a consistent, stable color.

Interpolation — Video can be enlarged by doubling or quadrupling the pixels of the original image, resulting in a coarse, blocky image. Interpolation fills in the gap between two video lines with an average of the line above and below, smoothing the enlargement.

MIP mapping — A small polygon should use a smaller, lower resolution texture map. Larger polygons require larger, higher resolution texture maps. MIP mapping automatically switches between these sizes as the polygon is zoomed in or out.

Texels — Texture-mapped pixel. A texel is used to paint a pixel on a polygon.

Trilinear filtering — When a polygon falls between small and large sizes, each pixel in the polygon is projected onto both the high resolution and the low resolution texture map using an average of the two maps, which prevents abrupt jumps in texture coarseness.

YUV->RGB colorspace conversion — YUV is a way to compress Red, Green, Blue color data using only chroma and luminance. Hardware support for YUV to RGB conversion removes the burden of complex calculations from your CPU, resulting in faster video playback.

Z-buffering — Rather than simply overlaying the background objects with foreground objects, in Z-order (from back to front), which is the "Painter's method," a hardware Z-buffer automatically sorts the pixels and prevents unnecessary painting in the first place.

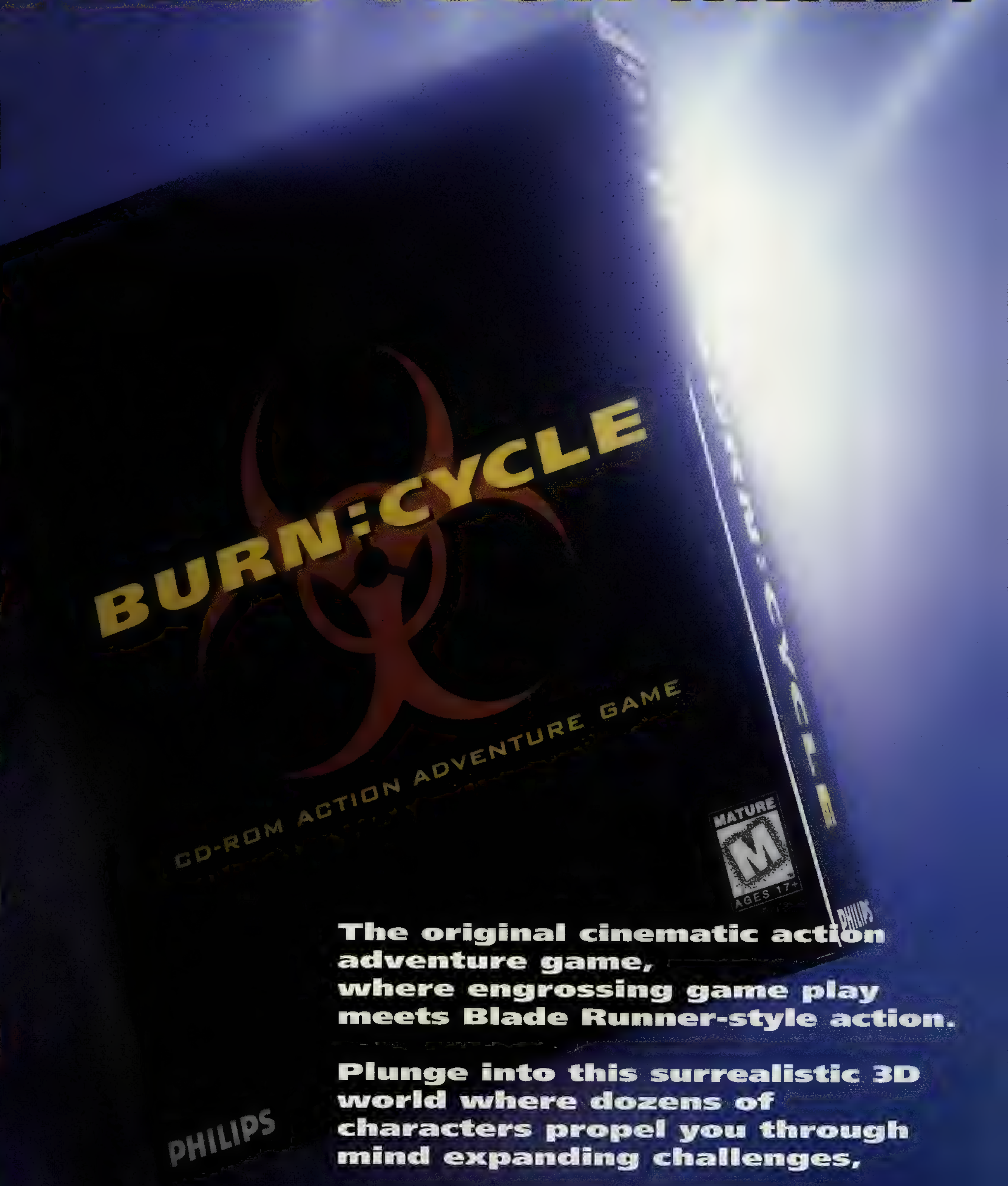
CONTACTS

	Creative Labs 3D Blaster	Diamond Edge 3D	Matrox MGA Millenium	Philips Tasmania 3D
Address	Creative Labs, Inc. 1901 McCarthy Blvd. Milpitas, CA 95035	Diamond Multimedia Systems, Inc. 2880 Junction Ave. San Jose, CA 95134-1922	Matrox Graphics, Inc. 1055 Saint-Regis Dorval (Quebec), Canada HP9P 2T4	Philips Electronics North America Corp. 811 E Arques Ave. Sunnyvale, CA 94088
Telephone	(408) 428-2329	(800) 468-5846	(514) 685-2630	(800) 978-3079
Info on World Wide Web	http://www.creaf.com/www/products/3d/3dblast.html	http://www.diamondmm.com/products/multi-accel/edge3d-2000s/	http://www.matrox.com/mgaweb/products.htm	http://www.philips.com

What are you doing here?
The free Tempest 2000 demo disk is back at the front of the magazine.
If your disk is missing download it from http://www.atari.com

Product Information Number 95

USE YOUR BRAIN... OR LOSE YOUR MIND!


BURN:CYCLE
CD-ROM ACTION ADVENTURE GAME
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The original cinematic action adventure game, where engrossing game play meets Blade Runner-style action.

Plunge into this surrealistic 3D world where dozens of characters propel you through mind expanding challenges,

to one shocking conclusion!

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http://www.burncycle.com

PC Gamer Goes Online (and we mean it this time)

If you're one of the many web navigatin', cyberspace surfin', online browsin', game lovin', *PC Gamer* readers who've been dialing into our web site, you've probably been a little puzzled as to why it never, well, *changes*. Let's just say our troubles began when the *PC Gamer* team took a trip to find ourselves a new staffer...

First, we traveled to the smaller islands of the Pacific Rim in hopes of luring the happy natives (who, by the way, are well-versed in HTML) to our foggy little offices in Burlingame, California.

Unfortunately, things got a little out of hand when Dan unknowingly insulted one of the elders by touching his forehead with his left hand. Apparently, this simple gesture has great and insulting connotations in their land, and it was later revealed to us that Dan had actually signed "You're really big and smelly, and I think you walk like a girl."

Reeling from our first failure to find a webfooter, we decided we might have better luck "down under" — in Australia. How could we go wrong? After all, this is a land known for giant beers, nude beaches, cute little koalas, and a love of the Internet. And since shark attacks are common there, we knew that our new staffer wouldn't fear our own Great White-infested waters.

But boy, had we goofed. The Aussies are friendly enough, but unfortunately, they still think Yahoo Serious and Jacko are really funny. After a few days of "Oi, that Energizer'll surprise ya!" jokes, we crossed them off the list — and haven't returned to visit this twisted land since.

By this time we'd nearly used up our travel allowances and, dehydrated to the point of madness, we set out on one last desperate sojourn to find ourselves a webfooter. Our destination: Las Vegas.

We're not sure if it was the bright lights that distracted us or the promise of seeing Sigfreid and Roy's desert bungalow, but once we stepped off the plane, it was obvious to everyone that we weren't going to get any work done. In a three-day frenzy of gambling and partying, we ended up blowing all of the money we'd been given on slot machines and matinee performances of Andrew Lloyd Weber's *Starlight Express*. Chooo, chooo!

When we returned home, our spirits couldn't have been lower. We hadn't found our webfooter, and time was of the essence. But as luck would have, the answer was staring us in the face. Tucked away in a month's worth of unopened mail we found the resume of our newest addition — Jason Bates.

If there's a moral to this story, we haven't turned it up yet. We're just happy to welcome the new guy onboard, and to admire our new web page (check it out at *http://www.pcgamer.com*).

Hardware Requirements

With each *PC Gamer* review, you'll find two very important pieces of information: the game's minimum hardware requirements and the hardware configurations we recommend as the *least* you'll need to really enjoy the game. While a game will run on the minimum system the manufacturer specifies, it might not run all that well. Because of this, we test each game on several systems so we can bring you a more realistic assessment of what you'll *really* need.

THE PC GAMER RATINGS SYSTEM

100%-90% CLASSIC
Not many games can earn a rating over 90%, and even fewer can approach the magic 100. Anything that we rate over 90% is an instant classic — a game that's truly significant in both concept and design, and one that we'd recommend without reservation to anyone interested in PC gaming.

89%-80% EXCELLENT
These are excellent games. Anything that scores in this range is well worth your attention, though it may not make any significant advances over its rivals. Also, some genuine benchmark games of decidedly specialist taste will fall into this area — it may be the best 7th Cavalry simulation on the market, but not all of us want to relive Little Bighorn.

79%-70% VERY GOOD
These are pretty good games, which we would recommend to fans of the particular genre — although it's a safe bet that there are probably better games out there.

69%-60% GOOD
A reasonable, above-average game. It may be worth buying, but probably has a few significant flaws that keep it from earning a higher rating.

59%-50% FAIR
Very ordinary games. Not completely worthless, but not a very good way to spend your gaming dollar, either.

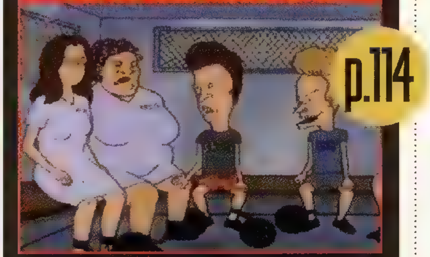
49%-40% BELOW AVERAGE
Poor quality. Only a few, slightly redeeming features keep them from falling into the abyss of the next category.

39%-0% DON'T BOTHER
Just terrible games — and the lower you go, the worse they get. Avoid these titles like the Plague — and don't say we didn't warn you!

PC Gamer Editors' Choice Awards

Each and every month, we honor the best games we see — those earning 88% or above — with our coveted Editors' Choice award. It's not easy to earn the Editors' Choice, and there are a lot of excellent games that fall just short of the honor. So when you see the *PC Gamer* Editors' Choice logo on a game at your local software shop, you can bet it's among the best of the best.

BEAVIS AND BUTT-HEAD


p.114

INDYCAR RACING II

p.127

THE DIG

p.110

TROPHY BASS

Largemouth Bass 14 lb. 12 oz.
FISH-ON!
REEL
p.123

The Dig

PC GAMER EDITORS' CHOICE

Category: Graphic Adventure

Developer: LucasArts

Publisher: LucasArts, P.O. Box 10307,
San Rafael CA 94912
(800) 782-7927

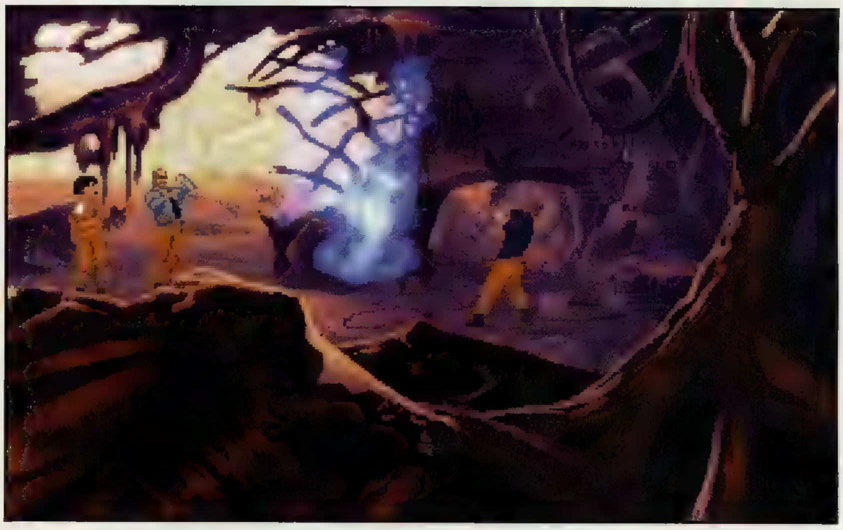
Required	We Recommend
Double-speed CD-ROM drive; 486DX2/66; 8MB RAM; MS-DOS 6.0 or higher; Mouse	Quad-speed CD-ROM drive; Sound Blaster or supported sound card

This adventure may not be a high-tech spectacle, but it's hard to beat for good, old-fashioned fun.

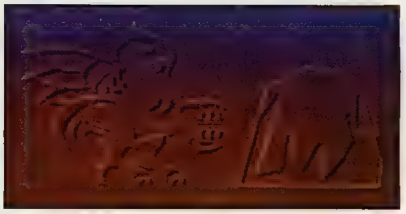
Ever since LucasArts scored their first big hit with *Maniac Mansion*, gamers have known that whenever a new adventure game bears the LucasArts name, it's probably gonna be good. While the competition has been busy playing with 3D-rendered graphics, full-motion video, and off-the-wall plots in their own adventures, LucasArts has steadfastly held the top spot in the hearts of adventure gamers simply because they know how to make *fun* games.

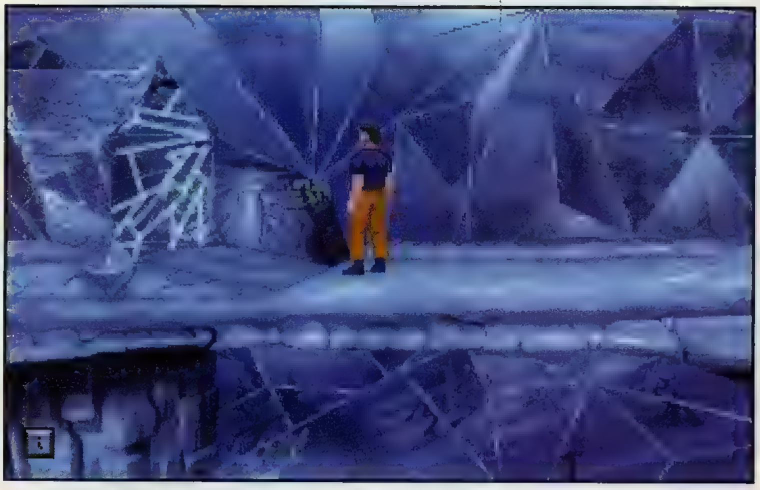
The Dig is certainly one of those games. Does it live up to the hype? Well ... not really, but there's been a *lot* of hype.

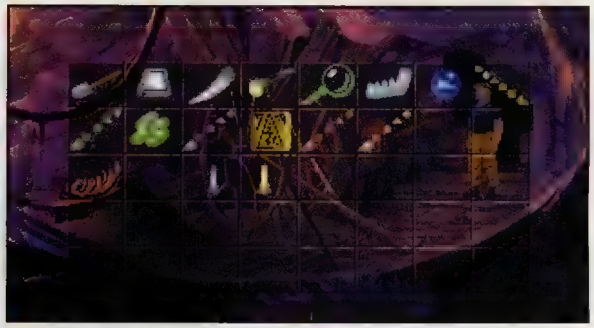
LucasArts did the smart thing and decided not to break the tried-and-true mold of previous LucasArts successes like *Sam & Max Hit the Road* or *Day of the Tentacle* for the sake of a new philosophy. Instead, *The Dig* presents all the elements you've come to expect — strong story line, intriguing character interaction, and lots of cleverly designed puzzles — in one cohesive and very playable package. All of this comes, of course, with a generous helping of sophisticated graphics and an elaborate musical score.

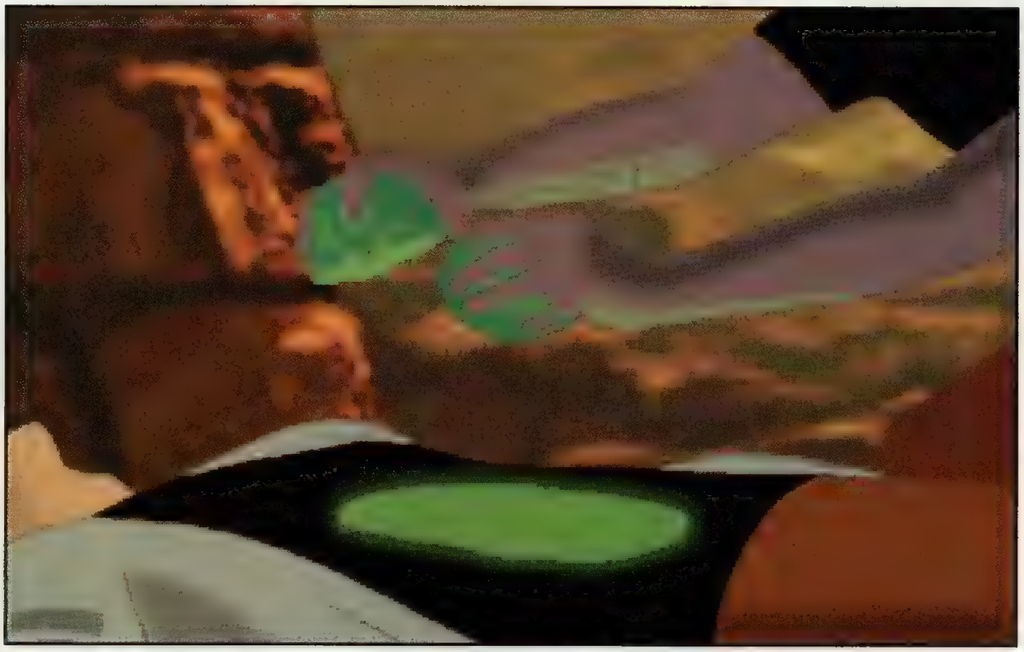

The team encounters the first signs of an alien intelligence when they enter a derelict spacecraft.

The plot of *The Dig* originated as an idea conceived by Steven Spielberg, and it receives an appropriately powerful setup during the intro animations. It seems a massive asteroid, code-named "Attila," is hurtling toward Earth. In an attempt to save the world, a select group of astronauts, accompanied by an archeologist and a reporter, are sent on a mission to nudge the asteroid off of its collision course using nuclear explosives.


The panels found in the alien museum offer subtle clues about how to use certain items you may find lying around.


Exploring the inner reaches of the alien complex leads you to this unusual airlock and the site of one of *The Dig*'s more difficult puzzles.


The familiar LucasArts interface has been refined to a precision instrument in *The Dig*. Bring up your inventory using the right mouse button, and simply point and click to look at objects, use items, or talk to other characters.



In a last-ditch attempt to ensure survival, astronaut commander Boston Low decides to resurrect archeologist Brink by using some ominous-looking alien crystals.

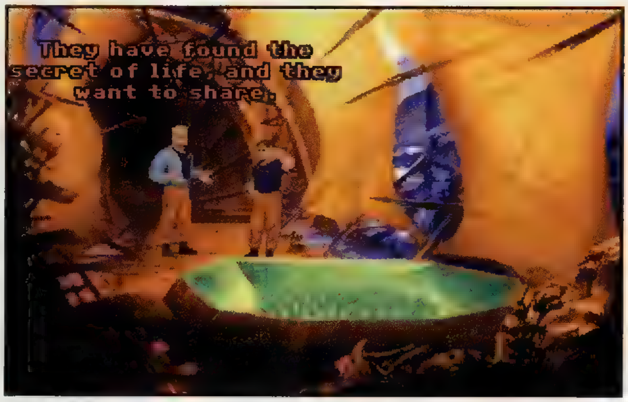
As the game begins, the shuttle carrying those astronauts reaches the asteroid. After some minor puzzling, you successfully divert Attila, and you're ordered to investigate the interior of the rock. You discover — too late — that Attila's really an alien spacecraft in disguise, and three crew members trapped inside the hollow asteroid are whisked across the galaxy to another world.

Aside from the first few puzzles found on the asteroid, *The Dig* takes place on this strange alien world. As the game unfolds, you'll have to deal with the death of a crew member, try to get a grasp on bizarre alien technologies, and search for a way home.

While *The Dig* suffers from a somewhat sluggish start (the first few challenges you encounter on the alien world are a little frustrating), the bulk of puzzles are classic LucasArts. Each of the items you find has a logical, if not always obvious, purpose in the game, and once you begin successfully putting the pieces together and exploring the environment, you'll be rewarded with an increasing understanding of the reasons for your unwilling visit to the alien world (I won't spoil the fun by revealing too much of the story here, but the plot takes some genuinely surprising turns). And, fortunately, you can expect to get a lot more gameplay out of *The Dig* than the all-too-brief *Full Throttle* offered.

Getting around in *The Dig* is a simple affair because, like most recent LucasArts games, the interface uses an effective design that's a point-and-click pleasure. A left-click of the mouse is all you need to talk, look, walk, or pick up and use the items you find. The inventory system is just as easy to use; simply right-click your mouse to bring up all available items.

The production quality of *The Dig* may not equal the in-your-face flash of *Full Throttle*, but it is first-rate throughout, with elaborate cutscenes depicting major events in the game and lots of smaller animations holding your interest in between. All of the game's dialog takes the form of effective voice-overs that bring the characters to life. Actor Robert Patrick (the chillingly low-key villain from *Terminator 2: Judgment Day*) provides a solid and thoughtful voice for the game's main character, astronaut commander Boston Low — and all of the other characters in the game, including Maggie the reporter and Brink the archeologist, are as well portrayed as the star.



They have found the
secret of life, and they
want to share.

Brink's sanity starts to fade after his resurrection, leading Boston to wonder if he's not a threat to both him and Maggie.

Some gamers are bound to complain that the low-resolution graphics in *The Dig* are beginning to look dated when compared to titles like *The Riddle of Master Lu* or *Mission Critical*, but the animations have a certain charm that few games have equaled.

The Dig isn't the best game we've seen from LucasArts, but it is a solid and rewarding adventure that's a lot of fun to play. And that's more than sufficient reason to check it out.

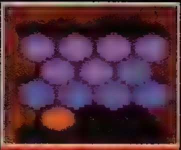
—Todd Vaughn

THE SECRETS OF THE DIG

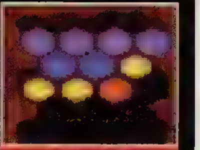
While many of *The Dig*'s puzzles can be solved by simply exploring every location and testing the objects you find, you'll run into a few problems early in the game that can be a bit trying. Here's help for one of the toughest.

In the nexus (the large central hub of the underground alien complex), you'll find a ramp that leads to what is apparently an alien power source. When you look over the edge, though, you can see that a fallen lens is keeping the device from working properly. Boston can't climb down to grab the crystal and put it in its proper place, so you'll have to find other means to get it working.

Use the control panel located near the middle of the screen. There are seven odd-looking buttons on it, each of which serves to issue commands to an alien device that is the answer to your problem.



This combination of colors will pick up the lens...



...and here's the color combination that will set the lens in its proper place.

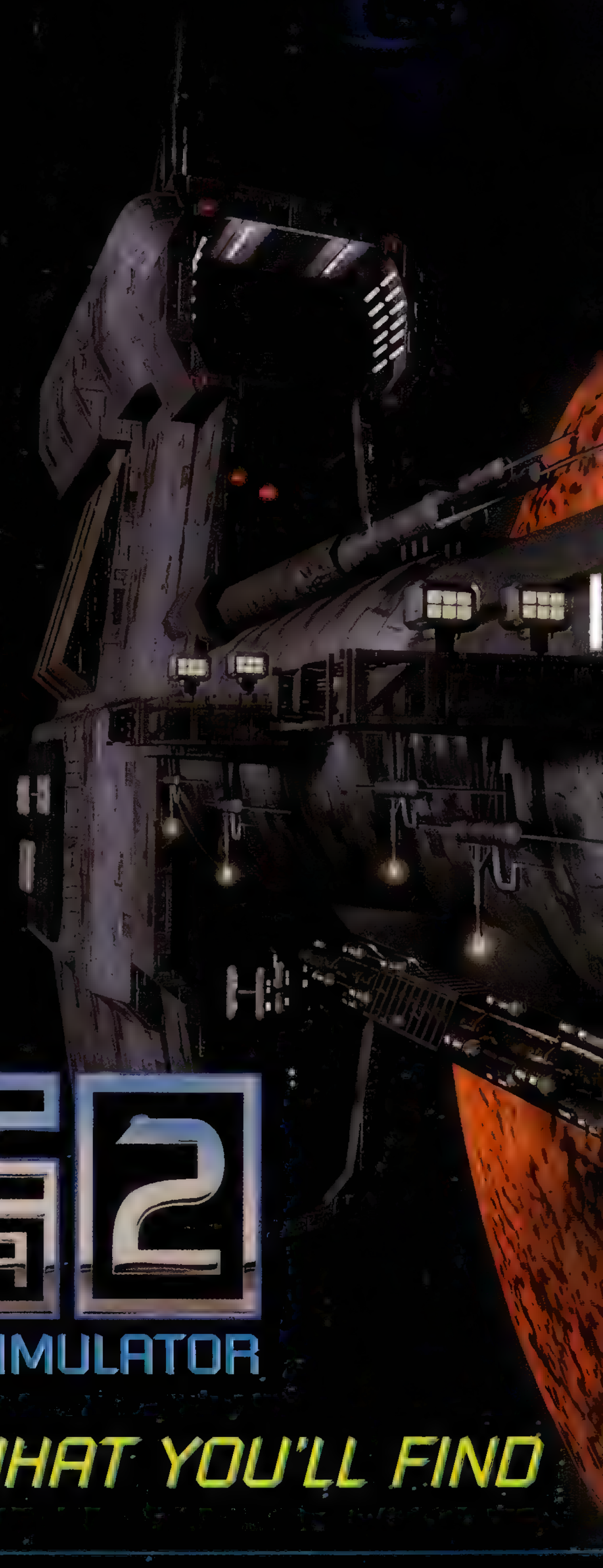
PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT

88%

HIGHS: Good story line, challenging puzzles and satisfying gameplay.

LOWS: It's a slow starter; Some puzzles are too vague at the beginning.

BOTTOM LINE: *The Dig* is yet another fun and rewarding adventure game from the masters of the genre.



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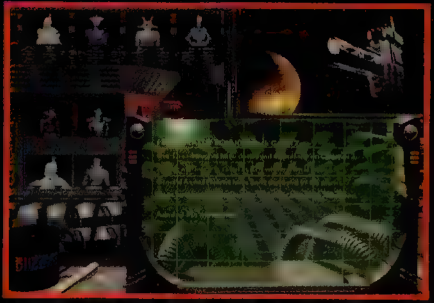

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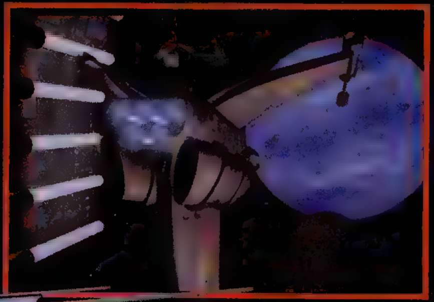

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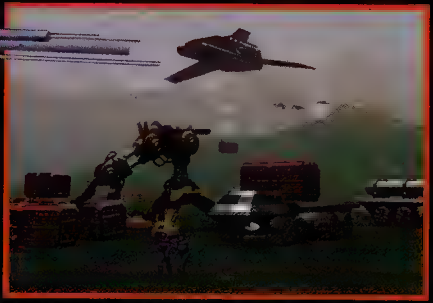

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Beavis and Butt-Head in Vir

Category: Graphic Adventure

Developer: Viacom New Media

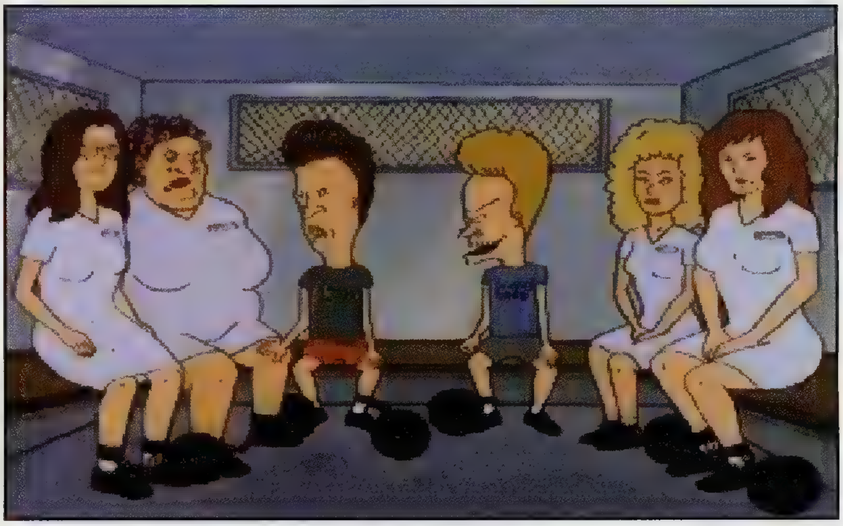
Publisher: Viacom New Media, 1515
Broadway, New York,
NY 10036 (800) 469-2539

Required	We Recommend
Win95; Double-speed CD-ROM drive; 486/33; 8 MB RAM; Local-bus video card; Sound Blaster or compatible sound card; Mouse	Quad-speed CD-ROM drive; Pentium; 16MB RAM

It's rude, crude, absolutely faithful to the hilarious MTV show — and it's a good, solid adventure game, too.

I'll admit one thing right up front: I used to despise Beavis and Butt-Head. I thought their MTV cartoon was the dumbest thing in television history: a crude, insulting celebration of ignorance and apathy — in other words, I thought all the things that everybody who hates the show thinks. Turns out, I just didn't get it.

Things changed a little over a year ago, when I started working for *PC Gamer*. The *PCG* staff is the funniest group of folks I've ever worked with — and they *loved* Beavis and Butt-Head. I figured I must've missed something, so I gave the show another look. You can guess the rest; it's enough to say that when a copy of Viacom's *Beavis and Butt-Head in Virtual Stupidity* arrived at the office, I was ready to arm-wrestle all takers for the right to review it. And I wasn't disappointed.



"Hey, baby." Butt-Head tries out his technique on the wrong woman.

Virtual Stupidity revolves around a typical Beavis and Butt-Head plot: The boys want desperately to join Todd's gang (Todd's a strung-out, no-account hood, so naturally Beavis and Butt-Head think he's God). They decide to prove how cool they are by recovering Todd's car from the rival gang that stole it.

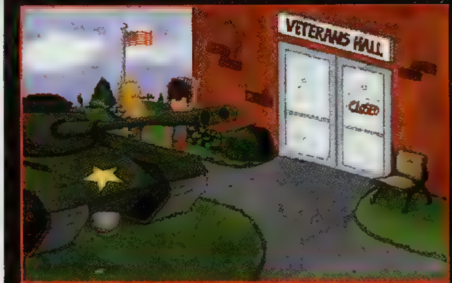
Beavis and Butt-Head

No Beavis and Butt-Head experience would be complete without a music video from the boys' favorite band, GWAR.

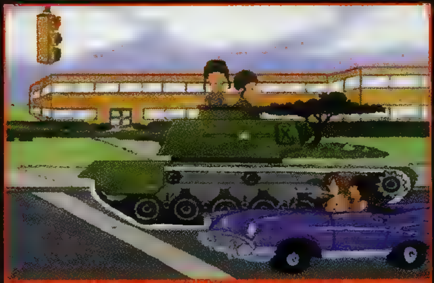
Before the game's over, the boys will crash a Save-the-Whales meeting; steal a Sherman tank; play with electricity; escape from jail; learn all the laws of physics in countless painful ways; and make 1,001 jokes about human anatomy and bodily functions. It's great.

One of the best things about *Virtual Stupidity* is that it isn't just a series of video clips linked together by rare moments of interaction. Heaven knows Viacom could've gotten away with a much less impressive game; it still would've sold well with the popularity of Beavis and Butt-Head to carry it. But this is an honest-to-goodness graphic adventure with an actual plot (twisted as it may be), lots of choices to make, and lots of

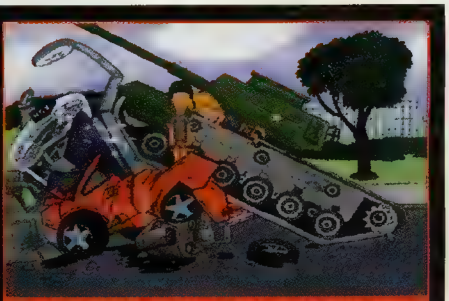
MOTORHEADS



Beavis and Butt-Head find a Sherman tank at the Veterans' Hall. Now, there's a recipe for disaster.



The boys think they've finally got a set of wheels that'll help them get some girls ...

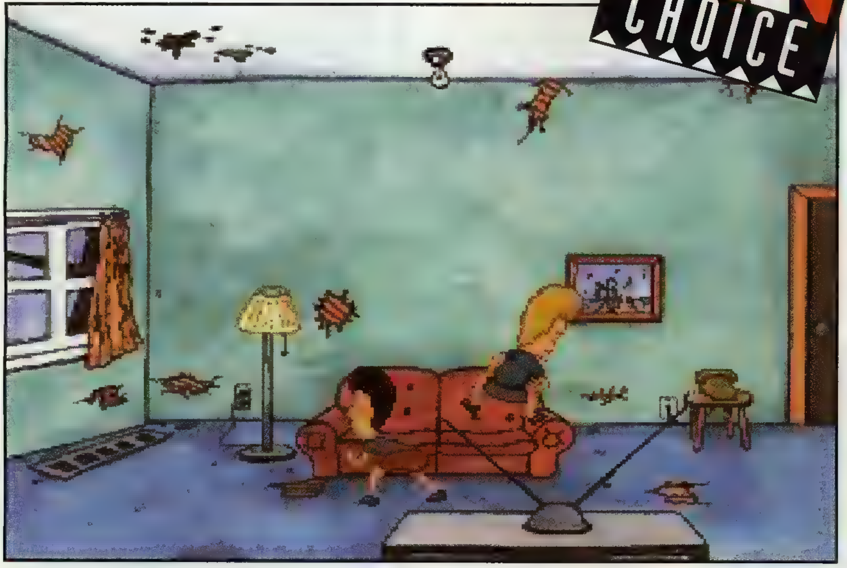


... but, as usual, they crash and burn in more ways than one. It's off to the jailhouse now.

tual Stupidity

PC GAMER EDITORS' CHOICE

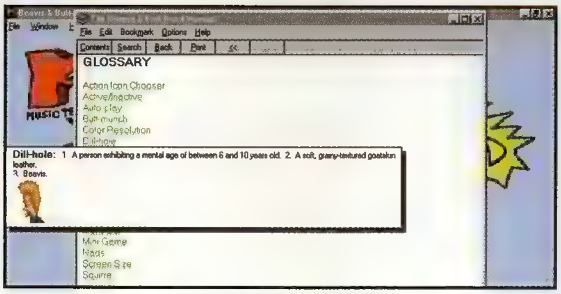
Win95



Beavis and Butt-Head get funky in front of the TV. Must be a George Clinton video.

elaborate (but not too difficult) puzzles to solve. At its heart, *Virtual Stupidity* is a solid game that would've been worth playing even without the well-known characters.

But it's not just a good graphic adventure that happens to star Beavis and Butt-Head, either. *Virtual Stupidity* really looks, sounds, and feels like an extra-long episode of the TV series. That's because a whole bunch of people responsible for the show were also involved in the game. Writers Sam Johnson and Chris Marcil provided the dialog; the people at MTV Animation created the game's transitional scenes and background art; and — most important of all — series creator Mike Judge provided the voice acting, just as he does for the show. Beavis and Butt-Head sound exactly the way they should — and so do all the other familiar characters who appear in the game, from Buzz-Cut, to Mr. Anderson, to Principal McVicar, to Todd himself.



GLOSSARY

Action Icon Chooser
Active/Inactive
Auto play
Butt-munch
Color Resolution
Dill-hole

Dill-hole: 1 A person exhibiting a mental age of between 6 and 10 years old. 2. A soft, grainy-textured goatskin leather.
3. Beavis.

Mini Game
Nads
Screen Size
Squirre

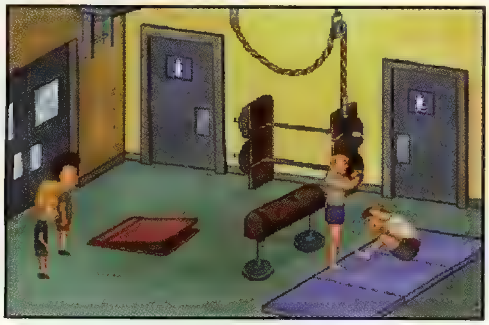
The game has online help, thanks to Win95. You won't find any clues, but you will get definitions of words like "dill-hole."

Even the music videos are here; click on the TV set in Butt-Head's living room, and you'll see a generous clip from Primus, Sausage, or GWAR ("They *rule!*"), complete with the boys' usual, incisive commentary.

The result is a *very* funny game. *Virtual Stupidity* doesn't evoke a chuckle or two; it makes you laugh out loud. Repeatedly. This is easily the funniest PC game since LucasArts published *Sam & Max Hit the Road.*

That's assuming you *like* Beavis and Butt-Head, of course. If you think, as I once did, that they're the most irretrievably stupid characters on TV, the game won't do a single thing to change your mind. That's probably for the best; if you don't understand the appeal of the show, you'll never make the connection between a condom and a gas station air hose — and you'll never finish the game.

—Dan Bennett

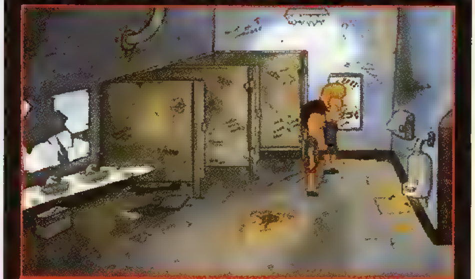


All the show's regular characters appear in *Virtual Stupidity*; here's Buzz-Cut doing his drill sergeant act.

BREAKIN' THE LAW!

Every third adventure game you run across challenges you to break out of some kind of prison — but only Beavis and Butt-Head would try to get back *into* jail. You'll have to do just that in order to finish *Virtual Stupidity*, and it's one of the game's most convoluted puzzles. Before you can break back into prison, you'll have to get past an angry guard dog, but how do you do that? Here are a few hints:

- The guard dog inhaled the juicy steak you gave him without tasting it, but how would he react to another dog?
- Your ticket into the hoosegow is in the coffee house restroom, but it'll cost you.
- The high school janitor sure seems like a lonely guy — the kind of guy who might think making balloon animals was the height of entertainment. If only you had a balloon...
- That item you found in the restroom might pass as a balloon, if you could find some way to inflate it.



Where the mind goes, the body will follow. The key to getting back into prison is somewhere in this room.

PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT

90%

HIGHS: A real, no-foolin' graphic adventure with all the funny elements of the MTV show.

LOWS: You'll want a fairly fast machine, and gamers who don't have Win 95 are out of luck.

BOTTOM LINE: Fans of MTV's delinquent duo will adore it, but people who miss the point of the show won't understand the game, either.

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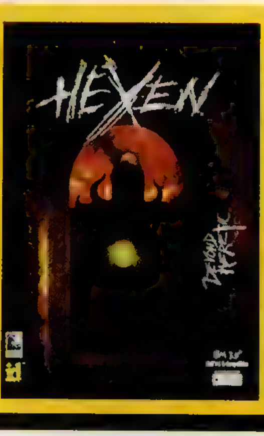

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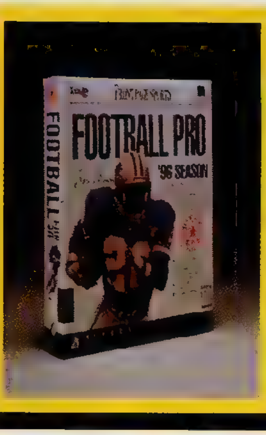

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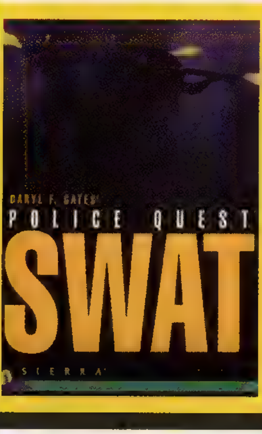

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PCGR296P2

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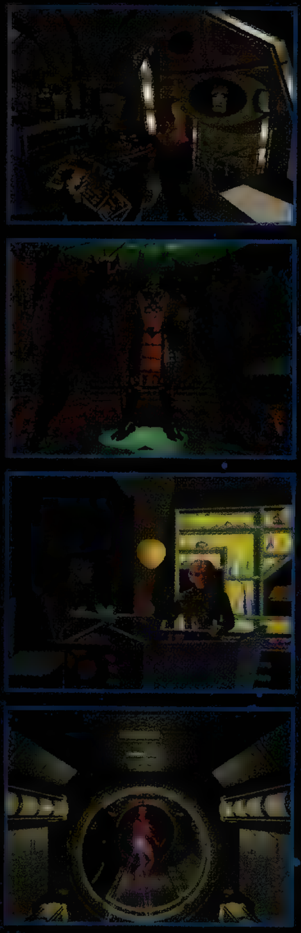

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Product Information Number 177

Navy Strike

Category: Air-combat Simulation

Developer: Rowan Software

Publisher: Empire Interactive, #4 Professional Dr., Ste. 123, Gaithersburg, MD 20879 (301) 216-9707

Required	We Recommend
Double-speed CD-ROM drive; 386SX/25; 8MB RAM; 10MB hard-disk space; Mouse	486DX/66; SVGA; Joystick; Sound Blaster or supported sound card

The latest jet-combat sim to hit the PC may not have the realism and gloss of the competition, but there's still some fun to be had.

A little over a year ago, Empire published Rowan Software's *Dawn Patrol*, a handsome, entertaining sim with somewhat mushy and unrealistic flight models. While these problems kept *Dawn Patrol* from reaching its intended audience of hard-core sim fans, novices found the attractive graphics and challenging gameplay a fun diversion from the demands of more realistic sims like *Falcon 3.0* and *Fleet Defender*.

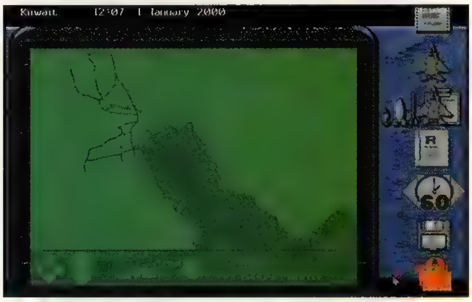
While Rowan's latest offering, *Navy Strike*, exhibits many of the same flaws that nearly grounded *Dawn Patrol*, it might just find a second lease on life through those same casual gamers. *Navy Strike* is often a fun — if undemanding — sim that has a certain awkward charm. And since it doesn't bother with the technical worries you might encounter in *Falcon* or *Su-27*, *Navy Strike* is easily accessible to players of nearly every skill level.

Of course, much of the game's appeal is the attractive SVGA mode, with plane graphics that are every bit as good as you'd expect from any high-end sim. The planes look terrific, and the game runs extremely smoothly — much smoother than *U.S. Navy Fighters* — even on modest machines. While the terrain graphics and the tracers of your machine gun are not quite up to par, they are still pretty effective when compared to most sims.

Once you're in the cockpit, you'll find three distinctive and attractive planes to choose from: the F-22N, the F-18E, and the hypothetical AX, which bears a strong resemblance to the F-117 stealth fighter. All of these nifty planes handle responsively, and are perfect for the mix of air-superiority and ground attack missions you'll encounter throughout the game.

The AX is especially fun, since it's just a big, agile death-dealer over land, sea or in the air. The only problem? The flight models for each of these planes is far too forgiving, and AI of the enemies leaves a lot to be desired. Serious sim fans will definitely be turned off by these two factors, but more casual gamers should find this gentler approach appealing.

A word of warning, though. As in *Dawn Patrol*, you'll still have to contend with a keyboard reference chart that's one of the most confusing I've seen since, well, *Dawn Patrol*. Once you get the commands figured out, however, you can watch your missions unfold or check for bandits from a wide variety of vantage points.

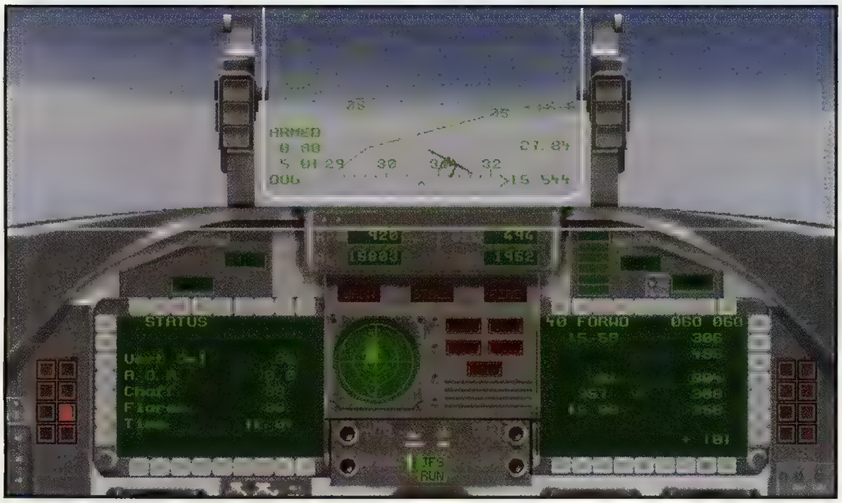


The Commander Module allows you to utilize all the assets at your disposal in a wide range of missions.

While much of the game looks and feels like little more than *Dawn Patrol* adapted to modern jets, *Navy Strike* does have one feature that sets it apart from most flight sims — the Commander Module. With the Commander Module, you actually command the air assets for a naval task force in either the China Sea, the Persian Gulf, or Libya. You are ordered to perform broad tasks (such as neutralize airstrips, or enforce a no-fly zone) and given a certain number of assets with which to do this. You set paths, designate targets, and even watch the missions performed on a small video screen. If you want, you can even jump in and fly the missions yourself.

If this Commander section of *Navy Strike* wasn't burdened with a confusing, cluttered interface, it might be reason enough to recommend the game. But this is not a title without its problems. If you're not interested in the Commander section, or don't care for unrealistic flight models, then *U.S. Navy Fighters* is the better bet. But if you want to call the shots for an entire theater of war and don't care if the roll-rates and weapon loadouts aren't up to combat specs, then *Navy Strike* may be right up your alley.

—*T. Liam McDonald*



The in-flight graphics of *Navy Strike* benefit from a silky smooth frame rate and detailed plane animations. You'll still need a Pentium to get the most out of them, though.

PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT

80%

HIGHS: Good graphics; campaign mode adds new dimension.

LOWS: Bewildering keystrokes, menus; unrealistic flight models.

BOTTOM LINE: With its emphasis on fun air combat and the intriguing Command Module, *Navy Strike* is a good introductory sim.

Aliens

Category: Graphic Adventure

Developer: Cryo

Publisher: Mindscape, 88 Rowland Way,
Novato, CA 94945
(415) 897-9900

Required	We Recommend
Double-speed CD-ROM drive; 486DX2/66; 8MB RAM; 20MB hard-drive space; SVGA; Mouse	Quad-speed CD-ROM drive; Pentium; 16MB RAM; Supported sound card; SmartDrive

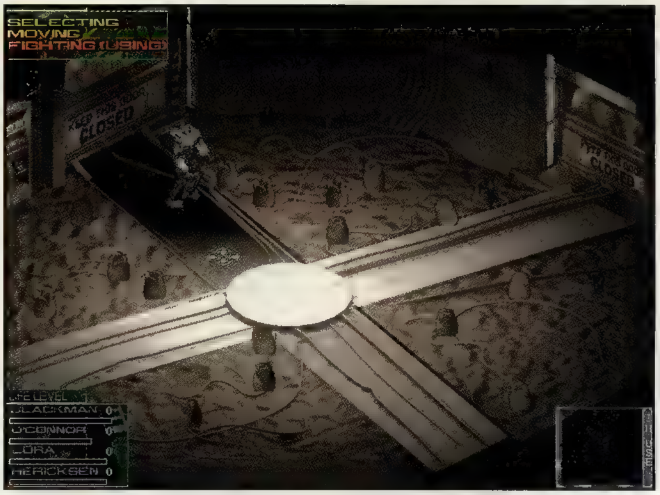
Despite its wonderfully dreary graphics and intense subject matter, *Aliens* is brought to a halt by bad dialog and frustrating puzzles.

There's no denying that we were pretty excited when we got our first look at *Aliens: A Comic Book Adventure* nearly a year ago. This dark and sinister adventure game seemed to have all of the right ingredients for a sure-fire hit. *Aliens* combines the talents of the *Dragon Lore* and *Lost Eden* creators at Cryo, the art and characters of the Dark Horse Comics Aliens series, and those despicable xenomorphs from three (ok ... two) of the most popular science fiction films in recent history. But after just a few minutes of playing through this adventure game, it's painfully obvious that the end product didn't come together nearly as well as it should have.

And it's a shame, too, because the problems in *Aliens* seem to be the result of careless oversights and a lack of consideration for the gamer. Shoddy dialog, poor character interaction, lousy voice-overs and crummy sound effects are just a few of the things that keep this title from being a winner.

The game *does* present an immediate appeal, boasting some of the most impressive 3D-rendered graphics you'll see in a PC adventure. The otherworldly environments of spaceships and isolated outposts are appropriately menacing, and deliver just the right mood for a creepy sci-fi tale. But once you get past the graphics and start puzzling through the game, the flawed elements start creeping to the surface, leaving the adventure flat and unappealing.

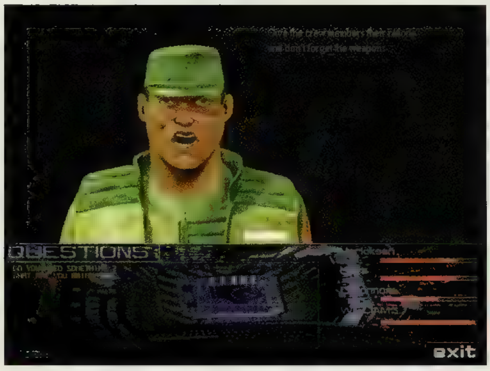
The story starts with you in command of a small expeditionary force sent to investigate a distress call on Outpost 54-C. Your mission is to determine whether aliens are involved, and — if you find them — take appropriate action to wipe them out. Three other characters are under your command, and from here it's supposed to be adventure gaming as usual. You'll need to talk to your crew, gather information about the mission, and deal with puzzles both great and small. But as you try to uncover important clues, the often baffling and obscure information you get from your team members makes even the simplest of puzzles a chore.



The game does deliver some much-needed intensity once you've landed on Outpost 54-C, but the timed puzzles and vague information about mission goals prove far too frustrating.

For example, when your character needs a green passcard from another team member, you won't be able to simply ask her, "Do you know where I can find the green passcard?" Instead, you'll need to start your conversation with "You're a good person, Lora." Then you'll listen to an abusive tirade, trading incoherent remarks that have nothing to do with the passcard until finally, (and quite unexpectedly) she gives it to you.

While few adventure games are known for their memorable dialog, this one features some of the worst I've ever seen. That could be dismissed if it weren't a key element of the game, but it is. And as you progress through the game, the dialog seems to get even more bizarre.



The character interaction in *Aliens* leaves a lot to be desired, with question-and-answer sessions that will leave you scratching your head.

As for the puzzles themselves, most present a good challenge for experienced gamers. But here, too, you'll find they're made unnecessarily frustrating by the inclusion of time limits. While these could add an extra level of tension to the proceedings, you're never given enough information about what you're supposed to do or where you're supposed to go, so you're left playing a given section over and over, trying every possible solution ad nauseum.

Despite the efforts taken to bring the dark and twisted visions of the Dark Horse comics to life as a computer game, the flaws and frustrations in actually playing *Aliens* are simply too severe to recommend it to all but the most dedicated adventurer.

—Todd Vaughn

PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT

59%

HIGHS: Great graphics and cut-scenes.

LOWS: Extremely weak voice acting and dialog; timed puzzles make most of the game unnecessarily frustrating.

BOTTOM LINE: A troubled and disappointing adventure for only the most patient gamer.

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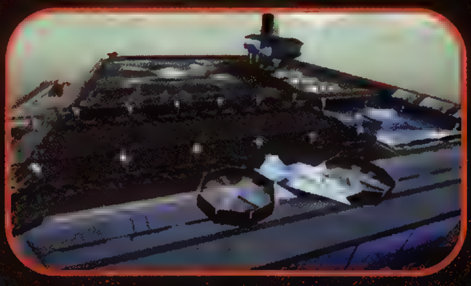

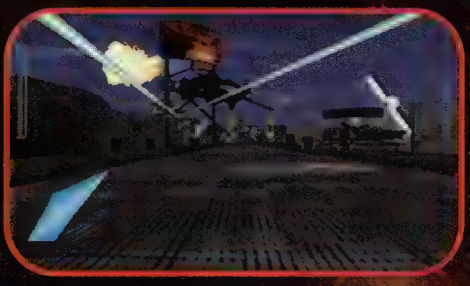

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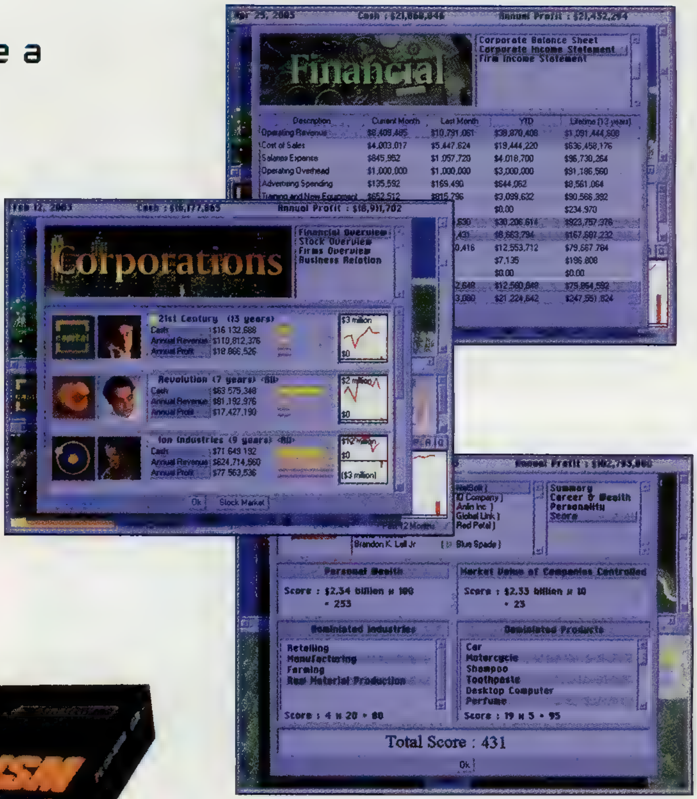
Product Information Number 182

INTERACTIVE MAGIC PRESENTS

CAPITALISM

The Real Strategy Game of Money, Power & Wealth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Description	Current Month	Last Month	YTD	Lifetime (13 years)
Operating Revenue	$8,409,485	$10,791,061	$39,870,408	$1,091,444,508
Cost of Sales	$4,003,017	$5,447,624	$19,444,220	$636,458,176
Salaries Expense	$845,952	$1,057,720	$4,018,700	$96,730,264
Operating Overhead	$1,000,000	$1,000,000	$3,000,000	$91,186,560
Advertising Spending	$135,592	$169,490	$644,062	$8,561,064
Training and New Equipment	$652,512	$815,796	$3,099,632	$90,566,392

Annual Profit : $18,911,702

21st Century (13 years)
Cash $16,132,688
Annual Revenue $110,812,376
Annual Profit $18,866,526

Revolution (7 years) <AI>
Cash $63,575,348
Annual Revenue $81,192,976
Annual Profit $17,427,190

Ion Industries (9 years) <AI>
Cash $71,649,192
Annual Revenue $624,714,560
Annual Profit $77,563,536

Personal Wealth
Score : $2.34 billion x 100 = 253

Market Value of Companies Controlled
Score : $2.33 billion x 10 = 23

Dominated Industries
Retailing
Manufacturing
Farming
Raw Material Production
Score : 4 x 20 = 80

Dominated Products
Car
Motorcycle
Shampoo
Toothpaste
Desktop Computer
Perfume
Score : 19 x 5 = 95

Total Score : 431

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  4 1/2 out of 5 stars
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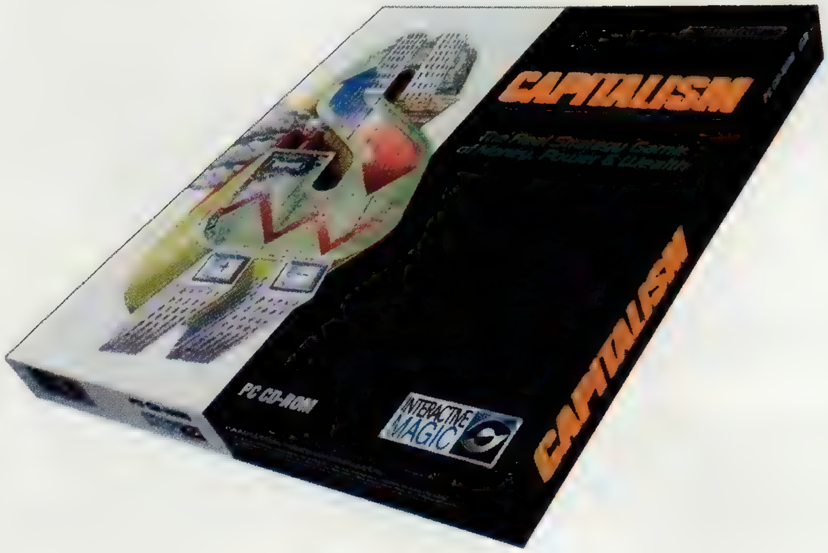
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Product Information Number 124

INTERACTIVE MAGIC

Trophy Bass

PC GAMER EDITORS' CHOICE

Category: Fishing Simulation

Developer: Sierra

Publisher: Sierra, 3380 146th S.E., Suite 300, Bellevue, WA 98007
(800) 757-7707

Required	We Recommend
Double-speed CD-ROM drive; 486DX 66MHz; 8MB RAM; Mouse	Quad-speed CD-ROM drive; Pentium 90MHz; Supported sound cards

Fishing at home is *better* than the real thing — because, as we all know, boats and beer don't mix.

Compared to the pulse-pounding excitement of a good flight-combat sim or 3D shooter, a fishing simulation may leave a few gamers cold. But before you dismiss the idea entirely, you really should check out Sierra's *Trophy Bass*; I'll bet you'll be surprised.

Even if you're not a fisherman, *Trophy Bass* will reel you in because it can be played on so many different levels. You can compete in a full-fledged B.A.S.S. Masters tournament (yes, the game is fully endorsed by the Bass Anglers Sportsman Society), going up against an entire field of pros; you can start a career, gunning for the B.A.S.S. Masters Championship; or you can just spend a leisurely afternoon fishing the lake of your choice, with no competitive pressure whatsoever. Variable difficulty settings let you further tailor the action.

The game boasts a pretty complete multimedia how-to section, too, featuring video clips and advice from some of professional fishing's biggest names. So even if you wouldn't know a bass from a carp, you'll be able to access advice on bass habitats, feeding habits, and even how the light conditions and water temperature will affect your fishing.

All this info will be invaluable if you hope to win tournaments, because there are a lot of variables under your control. You'll have to take weather and seasonal data into account as you decide which rod and reel combo to use, the type and even color of lure you'll try, how you'll cast, and most importantly *where* you'll wet your line. Should you try around shallow water and vegetation, near piers, or out in the deep? These decisions are vital — and fortunately, *Trophy Bass* gives you the facts you'll need to make the right choices.

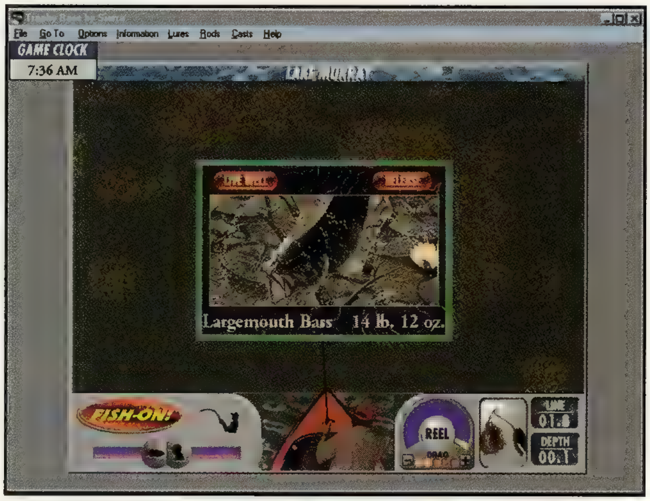
Once you've weighed your options and are ready to hit the water, *Trophy Bass* treats you to some very nice SVGA graphics. You view the lake from a top-down perspective, and the detail of the water, fish, and especially shoreline structure is damn near photographic.

You always see yourself, sitting in your boat, at the bottom of the screen — as well as everything within casting distance — at the same time. In the game's one slightly jarring design decision, the view of the water ahead of your boat scrolls so that you always have the same perfect, top-down view of the water. It's not very realistic, certainly, since this scrolling view gives you the ability to spot fish in the water, no matter where they are, as if you were floating just above them. But you do get used to it, and the omniscient perspective has the advantage of keeping the gameplay lively.

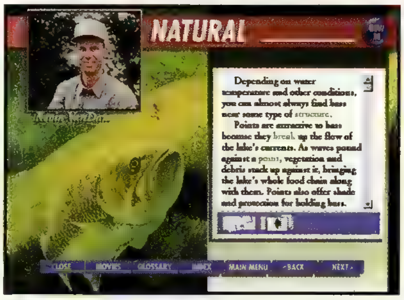
You can cast either by clicking and holding your mouse button and "manually" throwing out your lure, or use the casting crosshairs to scan the water ahead, then click on just the spot you want to hit and click on the cast button. Either way, you'll have to work the lure toward the fish, trying to make it behave as enticingly as possible, as you reel it back in. The programmed fish AI is pretty good, so you've got to be sure you're using the right lure and presenting it properly.

And when you get it all right, when you haul in your first 14-pound bass (they exist, really!), *Trophy Bass* proves to be as exhilarating as any shoot-'em-up. It's just an all-around *good game*, and one you'll spend hours at a stretch playing.

—Ned Gaskins



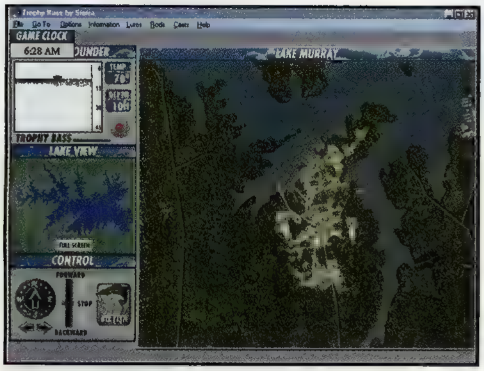
Now *this* is the kind of monster that'll make you the B.A.S.S. Masters champeen! You won't find 'em often, so don't blow it when you hook one.



Depending on water temperature and other conditions, you can almost always find bass near some type of structure.

Points are attractive to bass because they break up the flow of the lake's currents. As waves pound against a point, vegetation and debris stack up against it, bringing the lake's whole food chain along with them. Points also offer shade and protection for holding bass.

These how-to segments are very useful — especially if you're new to bassmania.



You'll pick the best fishing spot on this map display. Just make sure you make it to weigh-in on time!

PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT

90%

HIGHS: Great graphics, plenty of options, and good fish AI.

LOWS: The odd, "omnipotent fisherman" perspective isn't very realistic...

BOTTOM LINE: A great simulation, and a hell of a lot of fun.

Alien Odyssey

Category: Action-adventure

Developer: Argonaut Software Limited

Publisher: Philips Media Inc., 10960 Wilshire Blvd., Los Angeles, CA 90024 (800) 340-7888

Required	We Recommend
Double-speed CD-ROM drive; 486DX2/66; 8MB RAM; VGA; 16MB hard-drive space	Pentium; Supported sound card; Mouse

Part adventure game, part arcade shoot-'em-up, this game suffers from a slight identity crisis, but it delivers a modest amount of fun.

In this action-adventure game from Philips, you're cast as a humanoid from the planet Taola, on a routine planetary survey mission. As you begin scans of a new planet, your ship's sensors detect a lifeform. You ease your craft into the planet's atmosphere for a closer look, and almost immediately an electromagnetic storm engulfs your ship, sending you reeling out of control toward this strange new world.

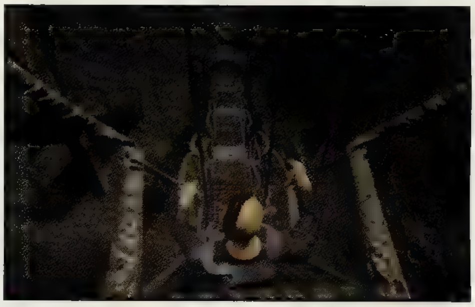
Stranded on the planet's surface with your now-demolished ship, you're looking at a bleak future until a friendly alien, Gaan Ta'Tukinae, comes to your rescue and says he'll help you find your way home. But there'll be a price to pay — you must help his people fight an oppressive occupying army known as the Dak.

That's the setup for *Alien Odyssey*, an odd combination of arcade sequences and 3D graphic adventure that tries to be all things to all people, but ends up being a moderately entertaining, somewhat confusing game.

The game is divided into four main sections, two of which are arcade sequences that certainly aren't anything to write home about — although they do provide a minimum of shoot-'em-up fun. Don't worry about control in this section of the game, as there is none. Like the arcade sequences in *Cyberia* or *Rebel Assault*, your path is controlled by the computer, and all you have to do is bring the crosshairs of the cannon to bear on enemy soldiers and rip them apart with a burst of gunfire.

While these sequences are the same sort of thing we've seen many times before — enemies popping up from behind trees, targets flying by at unbelievable speeds — the artwork is nice to look at and the action is fairly challenging. Control is clean during these sections, allowing you to maneuver with your choice of the keyboard, a joystick, or the mouse.

But if that's all there was to it, *Alien Odyssey* would quickly run out of steam. So to add a little more bite, *Alien Odyssey* takes a strange and far more interesting turn. Wedged in between the arcade shoot-'em-ups are 3D adventure sequences similar in style to *Bioforge*, with ever-changing, third-person camera angles that can leave your head spinning. Although the character graphics are less detailed than those in *Bioforge*, there are some stunning backdrops for the action.


Gameplay isn't the greatest, but eye-candy like this goes a long way in making the game palatable.

Yeesh! The ever-changing camera angles can leave you dizzy and a little disoriented.

You'll need quick reflexes to keep the crosshairs of your cycle's cannons on the Daks.

The puzzles in these sections are modest, so even the beginning adventurer has a good chance at solving them all. Well, *almost* all — unfortunately, one puzzle that deals with turning on three computer terminals within a 13-second time limit that seems arbitrary and unfair. But despite that, these sections work well — and frankly, you'll end up wishing there were more puzzles and less of the arcade sequences.

Alien Odyssey does *some* things well, but it breaks no new ground. That's forgivable if the gameplay throughout is engaging and entertaining, but the simplistic arcade stuff really drags the rest of the experience down. This game has all the basic tools of a winner, especially in the 3D adventure section. Too bad there's not more of it.

—Brett Jones

PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT

70%

HIGHS: Nice graphics and environments; good sound effects.

LOWS: Enemies are weak and uninspired. The gameplay is confusing, and only moderately challenging.

BOTTOM LINE: This game would be a winner if it stuck with one style.

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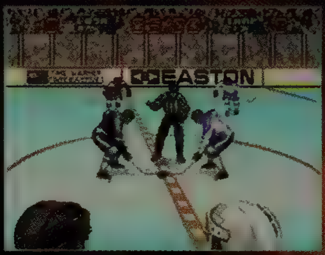

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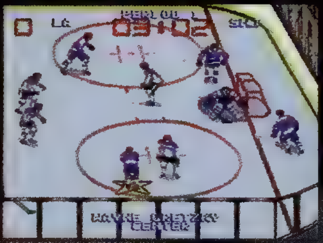
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Product Information Number 171

IndyCar Racing II

PC GAMER EDITORS' CHOICE

Category: Sports Simulation

Developer: Papyrus

Publisher: Papyrus, 1 Arsenal
Marketplace, Watertown,
MA 02172 (617) 926-7575

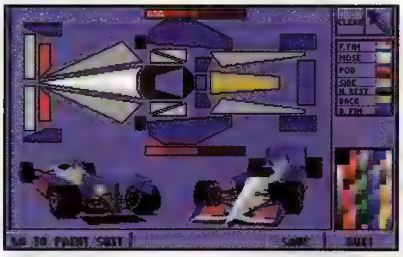
Required	We Recommend
Double-speed CD-ROM drive; 486/33; 8MB RAM; VGA	Pentium; 16MB RAM; SVGA; Supported sound card; Joystick or driving wheel and pedals; 9600 baud modem or better for modem play

***IndyCar II* roars out of the pits and takes the checkered flag in the race for the ultimate driving simulation.**

Sure things are a rare occurrence in computer gaming, but *IndyCar Racing II* from Papyrus had the inside track to become a champ before it rolled out of the garage. In their short history, Papyrus has seen nothing but winners, with *Indianapolis 500*, *IndyCar Racing*, and *NASCAR Racing* putting this small but dedicated team of designers at the forefront of racing simulations.

And the good news is *IndyCar II* easily lives up to its pre-race hype. Now for the bad news: well, there is none. If you're a long-time race fan — or if you've become one thanks to Papyrus' games — then you should rush out and get a copy of *IndyCar II*. Even for a dedicated *NASCAR* guy like me, this sim is flat-out thrilling.

IndyCar II is basically an Indy version of last year's *NASCAR Racing*, with a few key enhancements thrown into that winning mix. It's a major leap over the original *IndyCar Racing*, and it goes a long way towards creating a totally immersive racing experience. If you have the muscle to run the game in its 640x480 graphics mode — and that means a fast Pentium — the graphics are nothing short of spectacular.

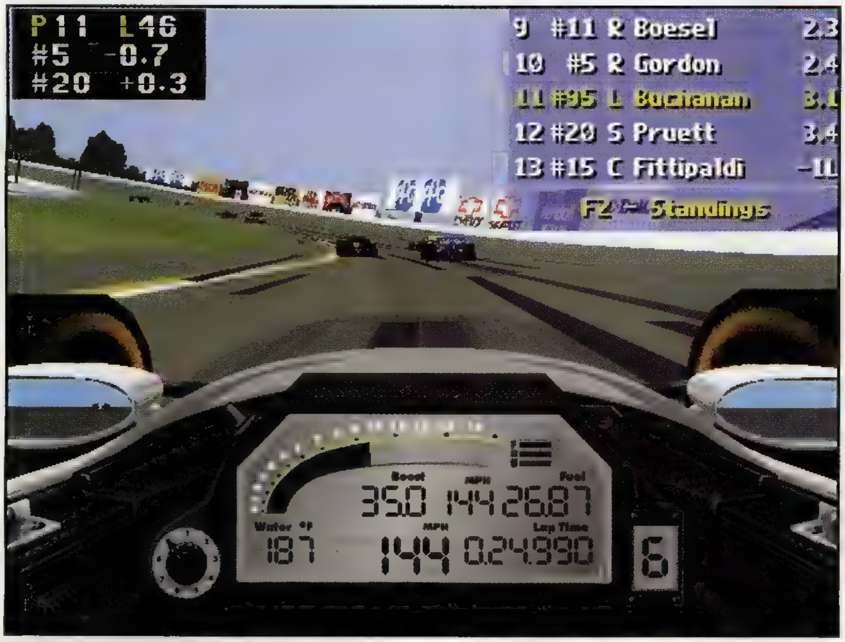


Design the look of your ride with the included Paintshop. You can bet that there'll be plenty of wild-looking car sets available on the online services by the time you read this.

But there's more here than just a new look for the original *IndyCar*; the Papyrus wizards have also managed to crank up the frame rate in their latest racing sim. If you're having trouble getting smooth animation in *NASCAR Racing* — and everybody is — you'll be in for a pleasant surprise with *IndyCar II*. This baby just screams, even with every bit of graphic detail turned on. Developers claim a 70 percent frame-rate improvement over *NASCAR Racing*, and after just a few laps around the track, I believe it.

You get 15 tracks: Long Beach, Phoenix, Michigan, Milwaukee, Toronto, Portland, Detroit, New Hampshire, Vancouver, Mid-Ohio, Road America, Nazareth, Laguna Seca, and Surfer's Paradise in Australia. If you prefer the easier ovals, then you'd better get ready to go back to driving school, because ten of these circuits are demanding road courses. Purists will be disappointed that there's still no Indy in *IndyCar II*, but the folks who operate the Brickyard wouldn't allow it to be included in the game.

Despite the missed opportunity to race the legendary 500, everything else about *IndyCar II* is a joy to behold. If you felt that the previous version of *IndyCar* was a little forgiving with its racing dynamics, get ready for a surprise. Everything has been tweaked since the original version, including the physics model of the cars. Try to negotiate a turn too fast under braking, and your car's front wheels might lock up, sending you sliding helplessly off the track and into the concrete. The artificial intelligence of your computer



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P11  L46
#5   -0.7
#20  +0.3
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9  #11 R Boesel     2.3
10 #5  R Gordon     2.4
11 #95 L Buchanan   3.1
12 #20 S Pruett     3.4
13 #15 C Fittipaldi -11
F2 - Standings
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Boost  MPH  Fuel
35.0   144  26.87
Water °F  MPH  Lap Time
187       144  0.24.990
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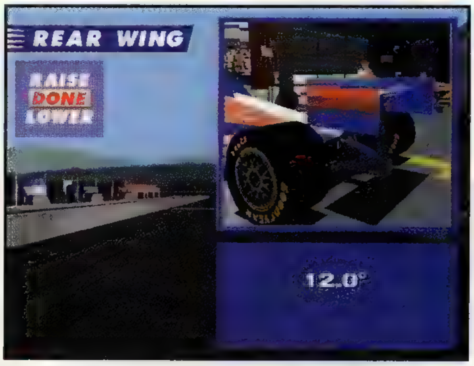
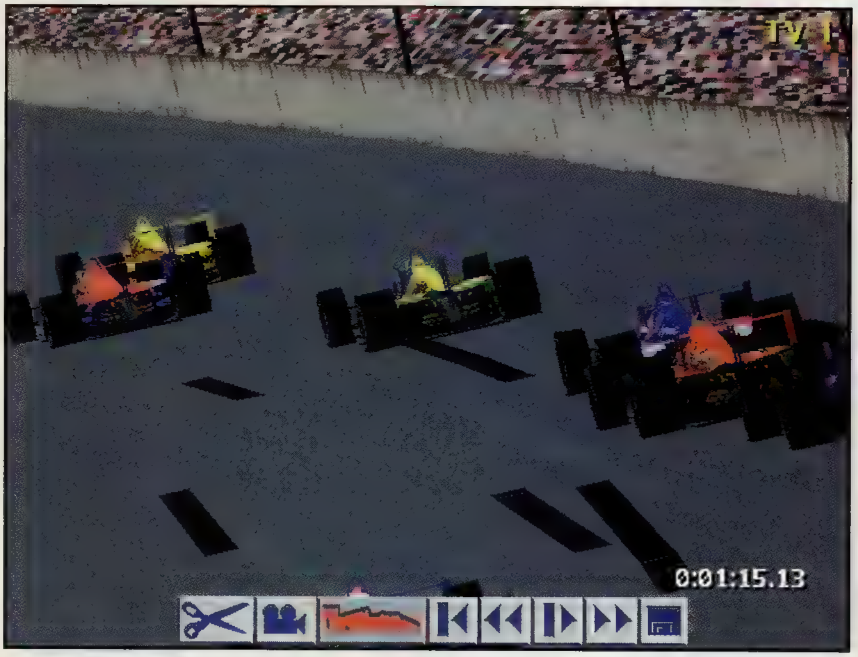
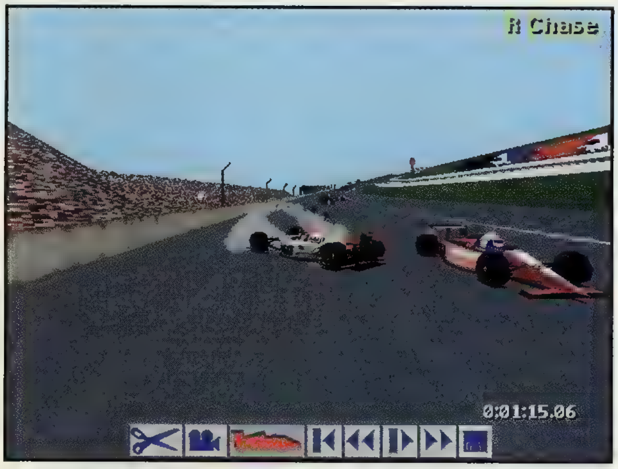
You're running down the leaders at Loudon, New Hampshire. After wrestling stock cars in *NASCAR Racing*, these IndyCars handle like a dream.



After you learn your way around the tracks, you'll have to get your hands dirty in the garage to find more speed. Weather plays a critical role in determining how these cars perform.



A much-improved frame rate will let you turn on all those pretty graphics without dragging the gameplay down. But you'll still need a Pentium for SVGA.



The excellent replay mode lets you watch your best crashes from several angles. Wrecks are spectacular, with metal, sparks and tires flying off the car.

opponents has also been significantly improved, giving the AI drivers a much more realistic edge. They're more aggressive when trying to pass, and they're better at evading wrecks, including the player's mishaps.

The graphics are the most obvious improvement, and they are delicious. The tracks come to life, with buildings, billboards, and the surrounding landscape all beautifully rendered. The cars themselves are sharp and brilliantly colored and textured.

The same dedication to realism found in Papyrus' previous sims is obvious in *IndyCar Racing II*. If you're accustomed to brushing the wall in your *NASCAR* racer, get ready for a rude surprise in these sleek IndyCars. Touch *anything* in these cars, and you're in trouble. You can turn damage off, of course, if you're a real weenie, and there's an arcade damage setting that lets your car absorb an unrealistic amount of punishment. For realism freaks, there's a new option for random breakdowns that can give you the same race-day frustrations as the real-life IndyCar drivers.

And like the previous IndyCar game, most of the real drivers on the IndyCar circuit are in the box, ready to test your driving skills. They're programmed to reflect their strength during the 1995 season. So if you want to run up front, get ready to take on Al Unser Jr., Emerson Fittipaldi, and Bobby Rahal.

As usual, Papyrus has delivered one of the most user-friendly sims imaginable. You can edit your opponents' names, determine the strength of your computer opponents, and design your own car in Paintshop. And if you've got a racing buddy in town, the modem play option lets you hook up for some outstanding two-player racing.

I've struggled to come up with something to criticize about *IndyCar Racing II*. I'm sure there's a bug or two lurking somewhere, but I haven't found them yet. The graphics are gorgeous, the realism is right on target, the frame rate is faster, the manual is excellent, and the modem play works beautifully.

This is another top-notch sim from Papyrus, and a definite must-have for any race fan.

—Lee Buchanan

And you thought *IndyCar Racing* was realistic...

If you've taken your first few laps in *IndyCar II*, you've probably already discovered that the tire-churning power and hazards of Papyrus' latest masterpiece make the original *IndyCar Racing* seem like a glorified arcade game. Basically, *IndyCar II* is a *lot* harder than before, thanks to changes that make each car's physics model remarkably realistic. So realistic, in fact, that you're likely to spend a lot of time bouncing off the concrete.

If you're having a real problem getting comfortable in your new IndyCar, stick to the easier ovals — Loudon, Michigan, Milwaukee, and Nazareth — until you get the hang of the more demanding handling characteristics in *IndyCar II*. The road courses are much more demanding, on both car set-up and your driving skills.

One feature you'll be grateful for is the improved AI. As you make your way through the pack, other cars will try to avoid you, even when you're weaving all over the place. Not only are the computer drivers smarter, their behavior is more realistic. The computer cars start out on cold tires, just like your car does, and they'll turn slower laps until the tires get warm. They're also capable of adjusting their cars during pit stops to correct handling problems, and sometimes they're even forced to the pits for unscheduled stops.

Firestone
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PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT

95%

HIGHS: Stunning graphics and sound; Very detailed car physics. The replay mode is really excellent.

LOWS: You'll still need a fast Pentium to enjoy the SVGA graphics mode.

BOTTOM LINE: Racing simulations don't get any better than this.

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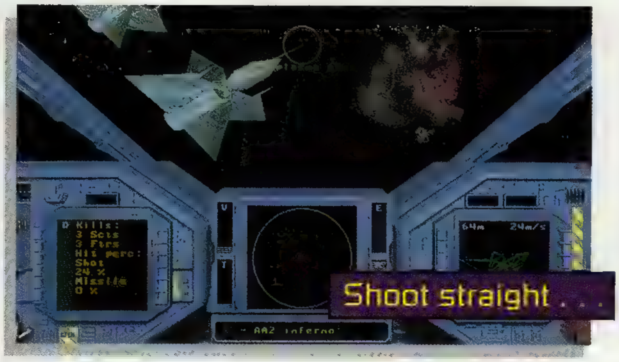
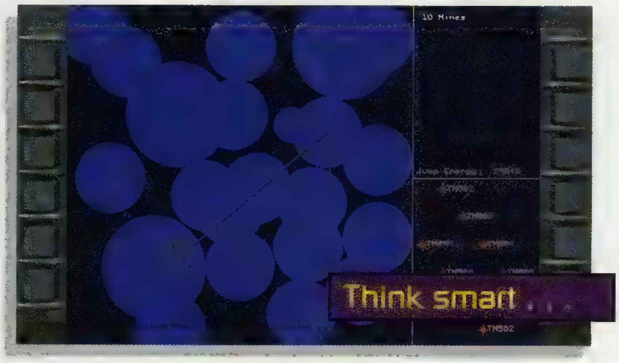
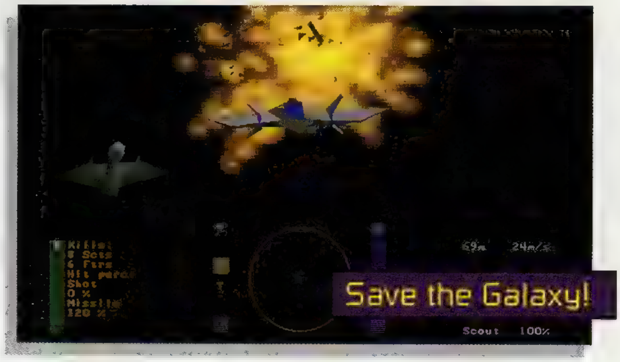

Shoot straight . . .


Think smart . . .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Product Information Number 125

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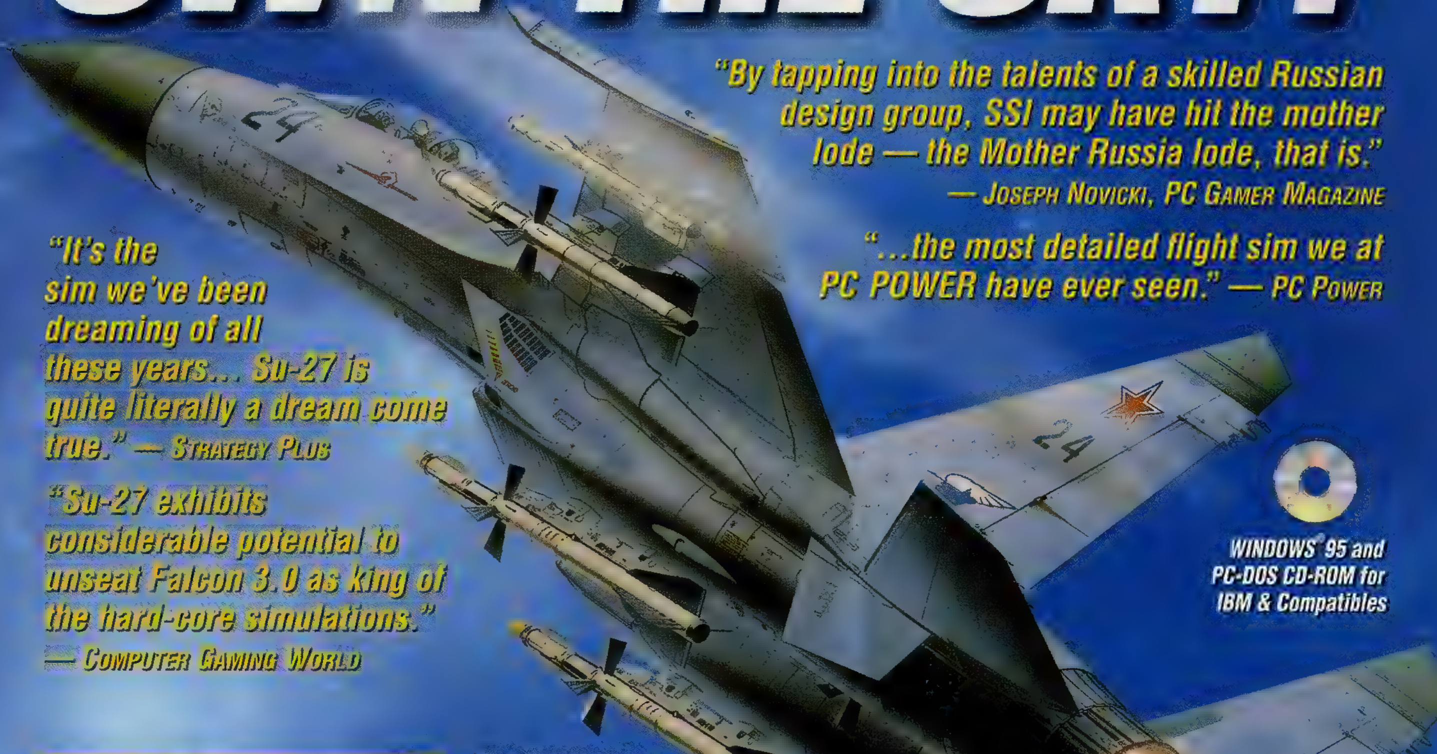

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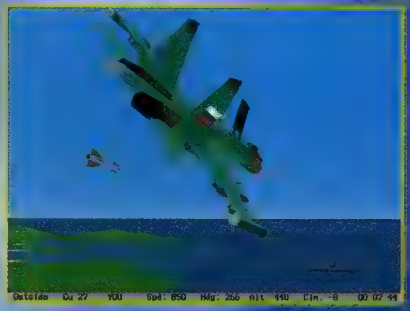

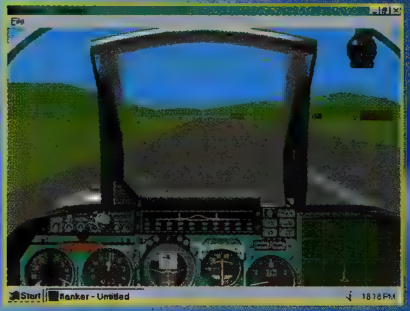

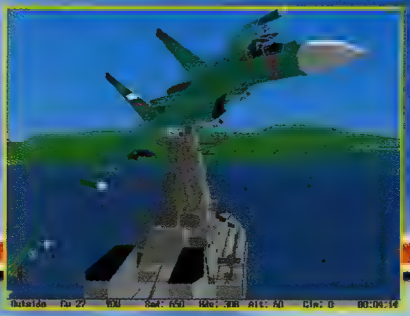

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Product Information Number 161

Rebel Assault II

Category: Arcade
Developer: LucasArts
Publisher: LucasArts, P.O. Box 10307,
San Rafael, CA 94912
(800) 782-7927

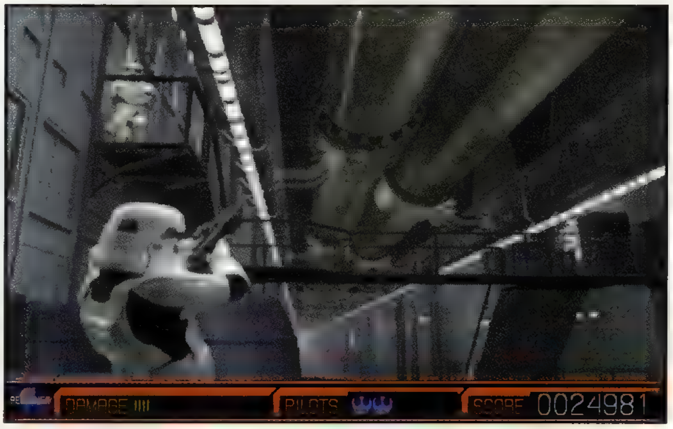
Required	We Recommend
Double-speed CD-ROM drive; 486/50; 8MB RAM; VGA; MS-DOS 6.0 or higher; Mouse	Quad-speed CD-ROM drive; Pentium; 16MB RAM; Supported sound card; Joystick

The latest Star Wars game delivers all the punch and power of the film trilogy — and lasts about half as long.

When *Rebel Assault* came out a few years ago, there was a great deal of excitement about its full-motion video graphics, strong sound effects, and of course its connection to the popular Star Wars universe. But your motion through the game was restricted, as though you were a train on rails, and gameplay was limited to little more than pointing your mouse-cursor at the bad guys and clicking. Despite its good looks, *Rebel Assault* was about as *interactive* as watching a movie and throwing popcorn at the screen.

Fortunately, LucasArts went on to produce *X-Wing* and *TIE Fighter*, two games that combined beautiful graphic images of the Star Wars universe with free-flight missions and plenty of new weaponry. But now, the company seems to have decided to take a major step backwards, and has returned to the FMV rail-chase format in their newest release, *Rebel Assault II: The Hidden Empire.*

There's a lot to like about *Rebel Assault II* from an aesthetic perspective. As you would expect from LucasArts, the game looks and sounds phenomenal. All of the visuals look like they're straight from the next Star Wars movie release, and since they were generated specifically for this title, the pictures fit the plotline rather than having to make the game fit the edited film-clips.

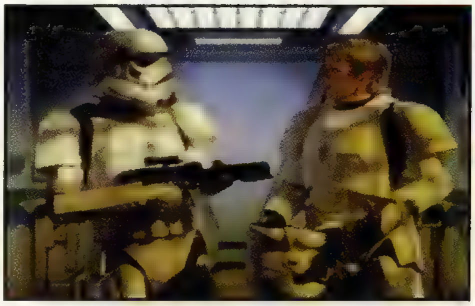


Though the game screens are very attractive, the simplistic gameplay means you won't need much skill to blow past these stormtroopers.

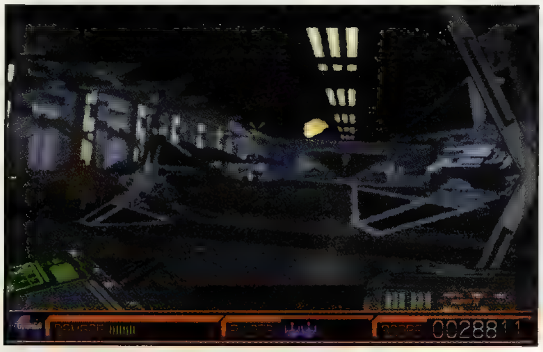
A suitable voice has been chosen for Darth Vader's speaking parts, which should definitely be a relief for those of you who were annoyed by the dark lord's whining chirps in the original *Rebel Assault.*

The game also features an entertaining (if not overly creative) plot, in which the Empire designs a new weapon capable of eliminating the Rebels once and for all (where have we heard that before?).

Despite all of the flash of the video portions in *Rebel Assault II,* once you begin to look past the visuals and play the game, you'll find it still suffers from a serious lack of interactivity. In the end, the game is little more than a Star Wars shooting gallery.



During one of the many video sequences, you trade quips with your companion as you try on stormtrooper outfits.



You'll have no more control over your vehicle than you did in *Rebel Assault,* but you do get prettier graphics...

Although each level has a few slight variations on the theme, from piloting speeder bikes on a forest moon to trading laser blasts with stormtroopers, players will almost certainly find the gaming tiresome after only a couple of hours of play. And just like the first *Rebel Assault,* once you've seen and done it all, there's no reason to go back. The only real reason to continue through the levels is the promise of yet another cutscene, some of which seem longer than the actual gameplay sections. This means that for every hour you spend in front of your monitor with the game, nearly half of it will be spent sitting back and watching a recording. To make matters worse, the game is ridiculously easy; It took me no more than three hours to reach the final level.

Even though it's nice to see the Star Wars universe back in motion again, it would have been much nicer to have gameplay more involving than that in the first *Rebel Assault.* For the same $50-60 you're likely to pay for this game, I figure you'll get more long-term pleasure buying the Star Wars trilogy on videotape — and getting yourself a big bag of popcorn to throw at the screen.

—Trent C. Ward

PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT

65%

HIGHS: Great cutscenes, soundtrack, effects; entertaining story.

LOWS: Almost no interactive fun; ridiculously short gameplay.

BOTTOM LINE: If you want Star Wars, get *X-Wing* or *TIE Fighter.* If you want a challenging arcade game, look elsewhere.

Lords of Midnight

Category: Roleplaying Game

Developer: Domark/Maelstrom

Publisher: Domark, 1900 South Norfolk St., Ste. 110, San Mateo, CA 94403 (415) 513-8929

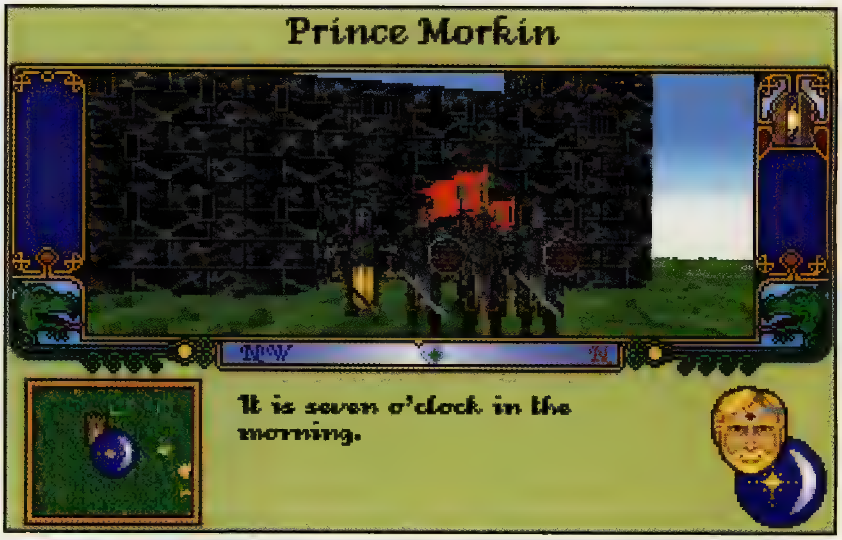
Required	We Recommend
Double-speed CD-ROM drive; 486/33; 8MB RAM; 10MB hard-disk space; VGA graphics	Sound Blaster or compatible sound card

Despite claims of being an "epic," *Lords of Midnight* holds the distinction of being among the worst roleplaying games in recent memory.

Back in the old Commodore 64 days there were a couple of games called *Lords of Midnight* and *Doomdark's Revenge*. Both of them would now be forgotten if designer Mike Singleton hadn't decided to complete his trilogy with what is, essentially, *Lords of Midnight III: The Citadel*. But since no one would pick up the third installment in a series they've never heard of, Domark wisely opted to publish it as *Lords of Midnight* — although if they'd been *really* smart, they wouldn't have published it at all...

In his foreword to the documentation, Singleton describes his creation as a dream combination of a strategy game, adventure game, and roleplaying game. "Despairing of an appropriate label," he decides to "suggest a new category of game" just to describe *Lords of Midnight*. "Epic" is what he decided to call it.

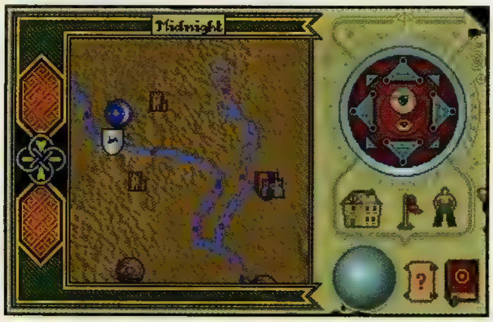
LOM begins with the gamer in control of good Prince Morkin, whose father has disappeared while trying to destroy the villain Boroth Wolfheart. Morkin has several allies working with him, and these allies travel across the land completing quests linked to the central quest. These allies often come with their own armies, and you must gain more allies to raise a large enough force to defeat Boroth and rescue Luxor.



Prince Morkin

It is seven o'clock in the morning.

Exploring the *Lords of Midnight* kingdom is none too inviting. The dodgy character controls make moving through the game world nearly impossible.



Using the map, you can send your allies on mini-quests in different parts of the realm.

The world of *LOM* is pretty large, and you use a map to range across it and direct your allies. This leads to one of *LOM*'s more interesting ideas — letting you actually play as a number of individual characters, in different areas of the land. See, rather than exploring with a party in first-person, you explore alone in the first-person 3D mode, and send your allies on quests by giving them traveling orders and tasks to perform. You can then jump in at any time, taking over and playing as any of the characters. You'll even have different modes of transportation at your disposal, such as flying on the backs of dragons and using boats to travel via water.

The big ideas don't stop there, either. *LOM* seeks to incorporate intricate character interaction, first-person exploration, map-based strategic control of armies, control of multiple characters on different quests, and even a detailed log to record all the goings on. If it had all come together, the game may well have deserved the "epic" name; but instead, each component is poorly executed — and none mesh well.

Even the basics of *LOM* get in the way. The graphics and sound are so outdated as to be instantly ready for the bargain bin. The interface is cumbersome in the extreme, myriad functions and controls that are unclear or so sloppily implemented that you'll find the simplest task a chore. A larger problem, however, is the terrible character control. Just moving through the game world is almost impossible, thanks to controls that send you spinning in circles and moving in exactly the direction you *don't* want to go. Just figuring out how to get around in the damn game becomes more challenging that solving the quest.

This is a classic example of aim exceeding grasp, and in the end, even the game's most commendable ambitions wind up buried in one of the most incompetent executions in recent gaming history.

—T. Liam McDonald

PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT

HIGHS: *Lords of Midnight* does have an interesting idea or two.

40%

LOWS: Bad sound, bad graphics, bad interface, impenetrable gameplay.

BOTTOM LINE: An absolute mess.

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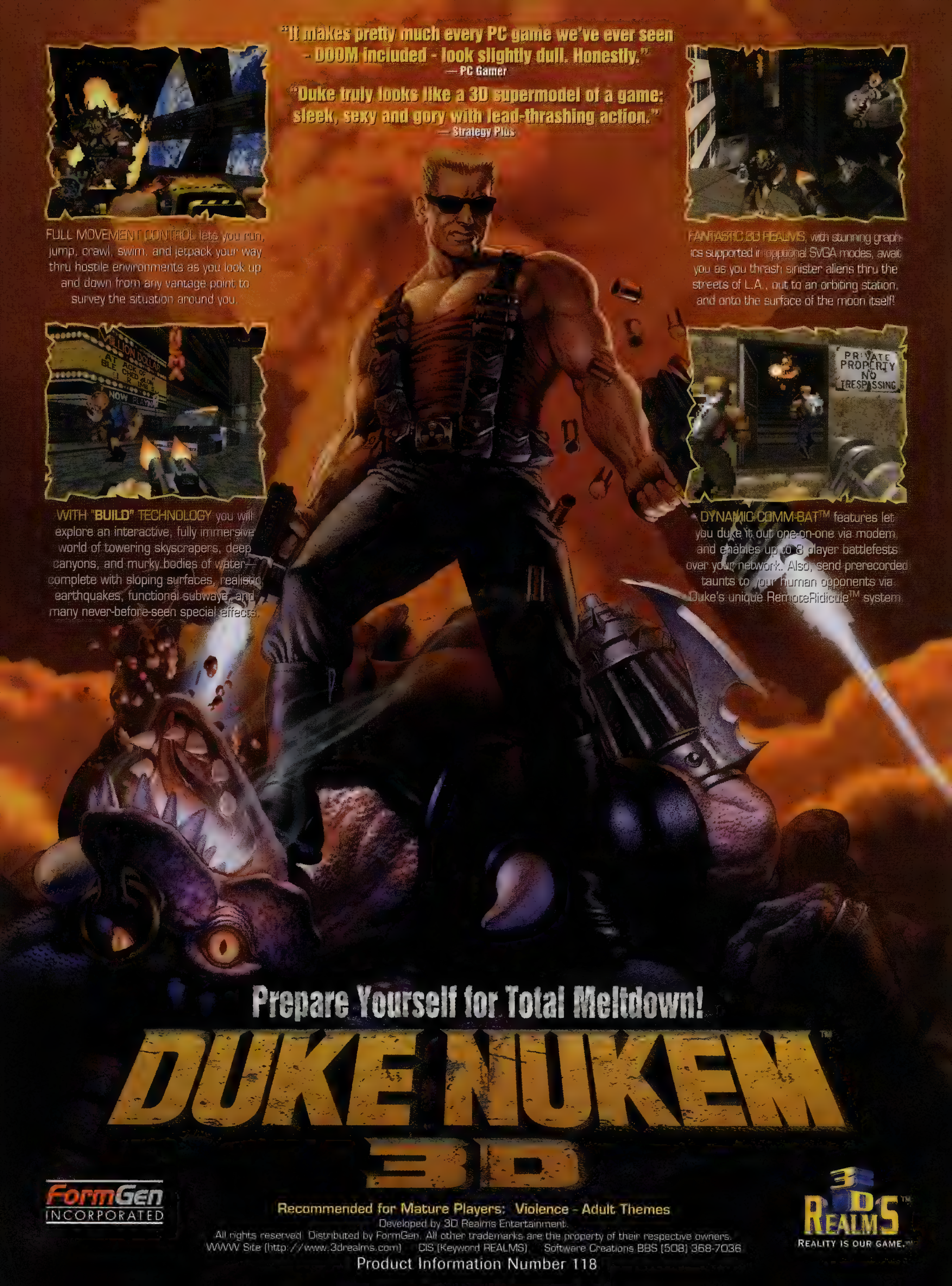

"It makes pretty much every PC game we've ever seen - DOOM included - look slightly dull. Honestly."
— PC Gamer

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Product Information Number 118

Title Fight Pro Boxing For Windows

Category: Sports Simulation

Developer: Comp-U-Sports

Publisher: Comp-U-Sports, 317 Stewart St., Saltsburg, PA 15681
(412) 845-7843

Required	We Recommend
386; Windows 3.1 or later	Mouse; Printer

Since there are no other historical boxing simulations, I hereby declare *Title Fight Pro Boxing* the undisputed champion of the world. And fortunately, it's a pretty good sim, too.

This text-based sim does just about everything you could possibly want in a boxing sim; you get every weight classification and every fighter you've ever heard of, along with plenty of bums that faded into history long ago. The game ranks them based on their record and the strength of their opponents.

You choose some basic strategies, such as fighting inside, fighting outside, going for the knockout, and covering up. You also pick the venue, your corner men, and your fight doctor. When the bell sounds, the fight is played out in blow-by-blow text descriptions.

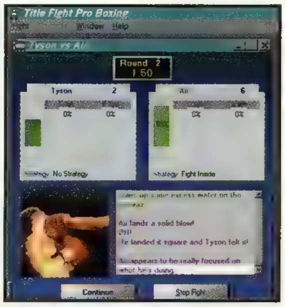
Don't expect to witness your fight with graphic detail, though. The generic graphics that pop up, and the lame commentary (like "Louis has some underrated skills") don't add much to the game at all. But the fighting itself, as described in the text, feels just right.

The boxers are rated in dozens of categories, including their tendency to be cut, punching power, punching accuracy, defense, and the ability to take punishment. So when Ali squares off against Rocky Marciano, you can look for Ali to dance and jab, probably cutting Marciano pretty badly. One crushing blow from Marciano, though, can turn the fight around in a hurry.

If you're a fight fan, you'll love this opportunity to settle some of the great debates of boxing history. Who's really the greatest — Ali or Joe Louis? How about Sam Langford, the early black boxer that no white fighter would face? Would Sugar Ray Leonard have beaten Roberto Duran in his prime?

It'd be nice to see a tournament-style option in this game, along with an auto-scheduler that sets the matches for you. And the developers definitely need to work on the commentary. Still, *Title Fight* is a very satisfying simulation of the sweet science of boxing.

—Lee Buchanan



Muhammad Ali is pummeling Mike Tyson early in this bout. Don't let the pretty picture fool you; this is definitely a text-based game.

PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT

79%

HIGHS: Lots of boxers; historically accurate; runs on just about any PC.

LOWS: Canned commentary seems random and often inappropriate.

BOTTOM LINE: *Title Fight* is a realistic and comprehensive simulation for boxing fans who can live without flashy graphics.

WWF Wrestlemania

Category: Arcade Fighting

Developer: Acclaim

Publisher: Acclaim, 1 Acclaim Plaza, Glen Cove, NY 11542-2777
(516) 656-5000

Required	We Recommend
Double-speed CD-ROM drive; 486/33; 8MB RAM; DOS 6.0 or higher	486/gg; 16MB RAM; supported sound card; gamepad

The latest in wrestling is Acclaim's *WWF Wrestlemania*, a very good PC conversion of the popular arcade game. The wrestlers are all big, meaty characters, making it easy to perform moves — and a lot of fun to see their results. When a 300-pound guy half as tall as your screen hits the mat, you can almost feel the impact.

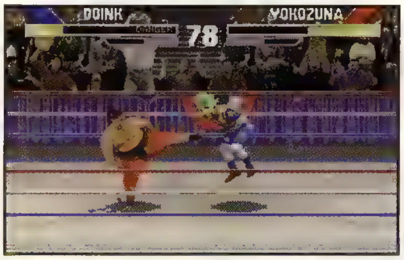
The moves themselves are another of the game's strong features. Each of the characters (there are eight in all) can perform a few common moves, but the *way* they perform them varies, so while one guy's super-punch may be a kind of smashing forearm to his opponent's head, another's will be a powerful round-house. And to further add to the individual feel of each wrestler, there are scores of trade-mark special moves available. These can be pretty spectacular things to see, with flame-like visuals and bone-rattling sound effects.

The difficulty involved in performing moves seems just about right — assuming you're using a four-button joypad, that is; anything less can be trying. With four-buttons, there's enough challenge involved in learning and performing the moves to keep the game interesting, but not so much as to be frustrating.

As good as it is, though, *Wrestlemania* does have a couple of problems. For one, there's the fact that you view the ring from the same boring, straight-on angle throughout the game. This gives the proceedings a two-dimensional feel, and limits the action to moving left and right for the most part. Also, the tournament mode has you facing off against the same eight wrestlers you can choose from in the beginning, sometimes even pitting your character against himself! Some fresh faces, perhaps a few "mystery" grapplers you get to face as you advance, would have been nice.

Still, these gripes don't take away from the fact that *Wrestlemania* is a good-looking, smooth-playing game — and most importantly, a lot of fun.

—Ned Gaskins



A swift kick to the groin, and old Doink ain't smiling anymore...

PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT

80%

HIGHS: Big characters, lots of moves, and nice control.

LOWS: Two-dimensional feel, and no new characters to face in tournament mode.

BOTTOM LINE: Plenty of mat-slamming fun for the whole family.

Frankenstein

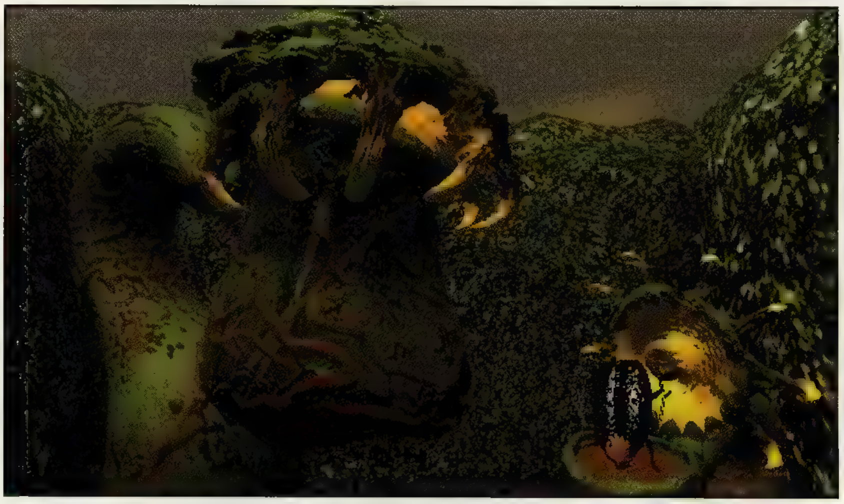
Category: Adventure Game

Developer: Amazing Media, Inc.

Publisher: Interplay, 17922 Fitch Ave.,
Irvine, CA 92714
(800) 969-4263

Required	We Recommend
Double-speed CD-ROM drive; 486/33; 8MB RAM; 8MB free hard-drive space; Mouse; Windows 3.1 or later	Pentium

Interplay's new graphic adventure takes you into the dark mind of Dr. Frankenstein and the cursed life of his monster.



That beetle you picked up is the perfect food for this hungry plant. Just put the beetle in the little mouth, and — presto! — the big mouth opens to reveal the clipping shears you'll need to cut away the hedge from a secret door.

There's something to be said for taking an age-old story and updating it for a modern, 1990s kind of audience. The results can be exciting as a well-known fable is brought to life for new generations to enjoy. Sadly, this is not the case with *Frankenstein: Through the Eyes of the Monster.*

Interplay's updated version of Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* is only so-so as a game; it's been updated with a clever 1990s style, but it doesn't cling tightly enough to its literary roots or present anything new to the adventure game genre.

Dr. Frankenstein sure is an unfriendly fella! He doesn't like all your snooping around. When the doctor threatens you, just go quietly. You'll get some much needed help from a mysterious friend in the prison cell.

The basic story does bear some resemblance to the classic work, but it's far from perfect. You wake up on Dr. Frankenstein's lab table and realize that you're his creation, trapped in the mad doctor's world of dangerous scientific experimentation. Frankenstein is overjoyed because you're alive — and because he can't wait to do more experiments on you. The first thing you need to do is get the heck out of there. You soon discover that Frankenstein's castle is a huge house of horrors — decapitated body parts, dead cats, and strange-looking medical instruments are all over the place.

As you wander, you talk to yourself in a voice that sounds like something straight out of a grade-B sci-fi flick. Your voice sometimes provides hints that point you in the right direction, but most of the time, it just says things like, "I must escape this place thick with evil!" You have to explore every nook and cranny of this crazy castle to figure out what's going on.

You'll slowly put together the pieces of the puzzle: In your previous life, you were hanged for killing your daughter (a crime you didn't commit, of course), and Frankenstein brought you back to life. The doctor has obviously been doing experiments for quite some time, and you've got to stop him by doing some experimenting of your own while planning your escape.

The puzzles and experiments range from the simple (plugging a wire into a switch to complete an electrical circuit) to the very complex (find the mines, gather some ore, crush it, refine it, transport it ... you get the idea). The easier puzzles are a welcome break after all the aimless wandering you have to do, but the tough ones will stump even the most experienced gamers.

Another frustrating part of the game is the lack of interaction with other characters. Like *Myst*, *Frankenstein* is a lonely game, but somehow the solitude that seemed magical in *Myst* doesn't work as well here. There's very little interaction with the doctor — which is a shame, because Tim Curry does an outstanding job playing Dr. Frankenstein. Curry plays Frankenstein as a brilliant scientist whose obsession has driven him over the edge — and who better to portray the mad doctor than *The Rocky Horror Picture Show*'s Frank N. Furter?

Frankenstein is simply an average adventure that novice gamers might enjoy for a few hours, thanks to its novel approach to Shelley's work. But without a better sense of purpose and a stronger connection to the Frankenstein legend, it holds little appeal for the experienced gamer.

—Lisa M. Howie

PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT

75%

HIGHS: Looks great; the sinister mood is well done.

LOWS: Exploration is unnecessarily frustrating; game's solitary nature can get boring.

BOTTOM LINE: Folks who loved *Myst* might find it appealing, but if you demand more depth, you'd probably be better off reading Shelley's book.

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Product Information Number 158

Old Time Baseball

Category: Sports Simulation

Developer: Stormfront Studios

Publisher: Stormfront Studios, P.O. Box
11686, San Rafael, CA 94912
(800) 245-4525

Required	We Recommend
Double-speed CD-ROM drive; 486/33; 8MB RAM; Mouse; SVGA	Pentium; Sound Blaster or supported sound card

Return to the glory days of America's favorite pastime with the greatest players the game has ever known in *Old Time Baseball.*

Stormfront Studios, the creators of the Tony La Russa series of baseball simulations, have returned to the diamond, this time to relive the days when heavy hitters like Mickey Mantle and Babe Ruth towered over the sport.

The premise of *OTB* is irresistible to baseball fans: You get 110 years of the game, with every team from 1871 to 1981. That's more than 12,000 players, and it sets up some intriguing possibilities. How would Ruth or Cobb fare in today's game? Or how about the great early black players, Satchel Paige and Josh Gibson? Would they dominate the modern game? Of course, it's impossible to judge how well *Old Time Baseball* answers these "what-if" questions, but the game comes up with generally credible results.

Matching up teams from different eras is a bit of a challenge, since batting averages, home runs, and pitching numbers have varied dramatically during the history of the game. *OTB* uses the Time Machine to level the playing field among the different eras; if you want to see how the 1980 Kansas City Royals would stack up against the 1927 Yankees, here's your chance.

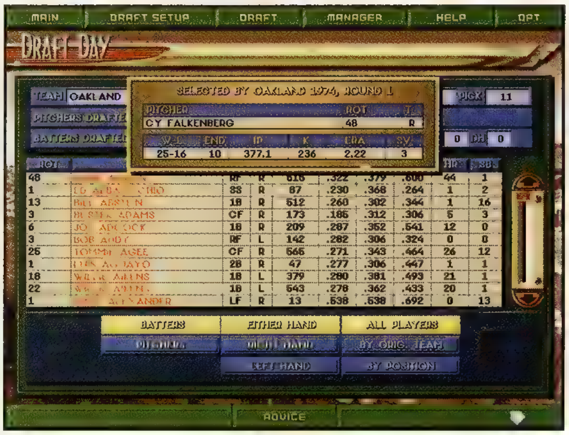
Old Time Baseball is also a gorgeous baseball game to behold. Stormfront pulled the graphics from *Tony La Russa III,* then dressed them up even more, and the results are impressive. The on-field action, while still a bit jerky on anything but the fastest machines, is faster and smoother than *Tony La Russa III.*

You get a full plate of season options to play with, including an all-star game, playoffs, a draft, injuries, and 40-man rosters with active and reserve lists.

Of course, I've judged these Stormfront games by their looks before, falling in love with the handsome graphics only to find plenty of problems once I got inside. And the annoying glitches you'll find in *Old Time Baseball* are the same ones that have plagued the La Russa series from the beginning: A speedy batter is held to a single after a line drive that bounces off the outfield wall; on another play, an outfielder is charged with an error, even though the runner doesn't advance on the bobble; Mantle bats right against a right-handed pitcher. These may seem like trivial bugs, but they're just maddening to baseball fanatics.

If these seemingly minor statistical glitches don't bother you, then you'll be happy with *Old Time Baseball.* Trouble is, the gamers most likely to go for this sim are the real nuts for stats and realism. If watching Mantle bat from the right side against right-handed pitching will keep you awake at night, you might want to wait until Stormfront irons out some of these inconsistencies.

—Lee Buchanan



TEAM OAKLAND
PITCHERS DRAFTED
BATTERS DRAFTED
PICK 11
0 DH 0

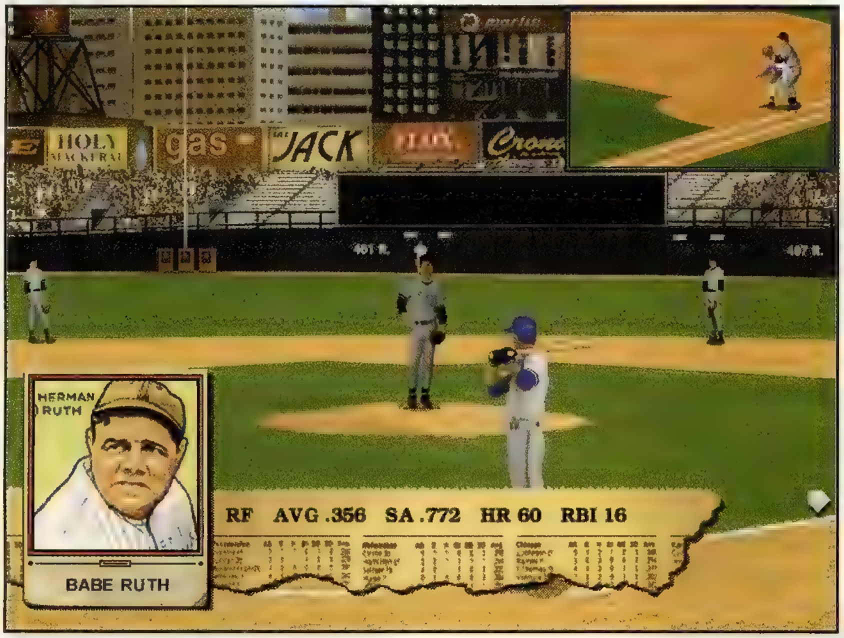
SELECTED BY OAKLAND 1974, ROUND 1

PITCHER	ROT	T
CY FALKENBERG	48	R

W-L	END	IP	K	ERA	SV
25-16	10	377.1	236	2.22	3

ROT								HR	SB
48		RF	R	616	.322	.379	.600	44	1
1	ED ABBATICCHIO	SS	R	87	.230	.368	.264	1	2
13	BILL ABSTEIN	1B	R	512	.260	.302	.344	1	16
3	BUSTER ADAMS	CF	R	173	.185	.312	.306	5	3
6	JOE ADCOCK	1B	R	209	.287	.352	.541	12	0
3	BOB ADDY	RF	L	142	.282	.306	.324	0	0
25	TOMMIE AGEE	CF	R	565	.271	.343	.464	26	12
1	LUIS AGUAYO	2B	R	47	.277	.306	.447	1	1
18	WILLIE AIKENS	1B	L	379	.280	.381	.493	21	1
22	[illegible]	1B	L	643	.278	.362	.433	20	1
1	[illegible] ALEXANDER	LF	R	13	.538	.538	.692	0	13

You can hand-pick your team of immortals through the draft. You can sort players by position and team, or ask the computer's advice.



RF AVG .356 SA .772 HR 60 RBI 16

That's the Bambino himself getting ready to take a hack at old Yankee Stadium. Looks like Ruth's lost a few pounds during his time travel.

PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT

82%

HIGHS: Beautiful graphics, especially the stadiums.

LOWS: A few bugs and some questionable statistical results.

BOTTOM LINE: A couple of errors keep this from being a perfect game.

Bad Mojo

Category: Adventure Game

Developer: Pulse Entertainment

Publisher: Pulse Entertainment, 246 First Street, #402, San Francisco, CA 94105 (310) 264-5579

Required	We Recommend
Double-speed CD-ROM drive; 486/33; 8MB RAM; 20MB hard-drive space; SVGA; Windows 3.1; Supported sound card	Pentium; Quad-speed CD-ROM drive

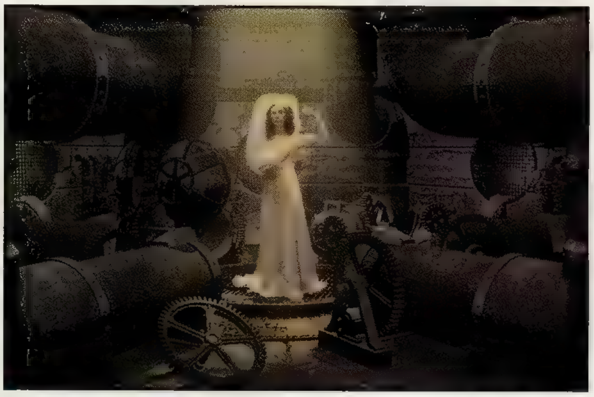
Franz Kafka's "Metamorphosis" meets David Lynch in the undisputed weirdest graphic adventure of the year.

As much as I hate resorting to *Myst* comparisons, that's really the only way to describe this game. The world of *Bad Mojo* is a *Myst* island seen through the deranged eyes of mondo bizarro movie director David Lynch.

Remember that scene in *Blue Velvet,* right after the title sequence ("Lumberton — a beautiful and normal place to live"), where Kyle MacLachlan's dad has a heart attack and collapses on the front lawn? The camera pans past his prostrate form and zooms into the grass, deeper and deeper, revealing the squirming mass of insectoid society living in the alien substrata below the world's otherwise sunny veneer. That's *Bad Mojo.*

With a tip of the hat to Franz Kafka's "Metamorphosis," you're cast in the part of Dr. Roger Samms, the 32 year-old head of California University at Barbary Coast's prestigious entomology department, who has been magically ("mojo" means powerful magic) transformed into one of the most lowly, despicable forms of life on earth.

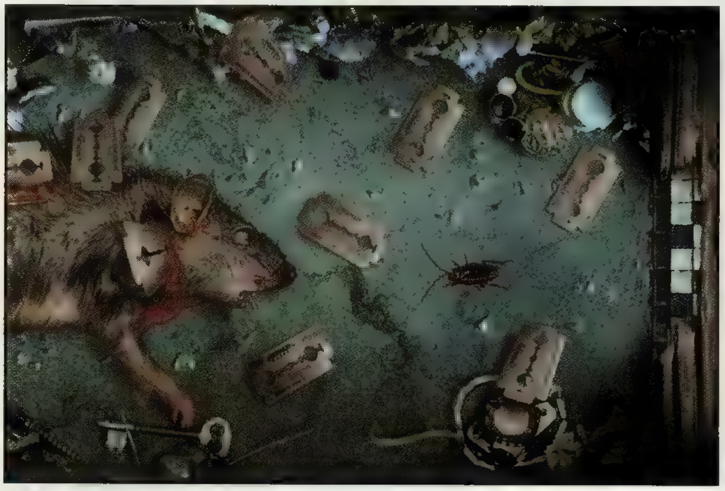
No, you haven't become a presidential candidate, but you're close. In what could unquestionably be called the world's first Cockroach Simulator, you guide the chitinous form of Cucaracha/ Roger under, over and through some of the most photorealistically disgusting scenery ever committed to CD-ROM. Disturbing images of filth and decay, dead and dying creatures, evil nuns and pregnant women are all rendered with crystal clarity and immaculate attention to detail, with a throbbing John Carpenter-style score and ambient sound.



At the end of each of *Bad Mojo*'s six stages, the mysterious Oracle appears with more enigmatic advice.

As the game begins, a miserable and slightly nutzoid Roger is packing his bags and preparing to skip town with the $1 million he's been granted to develop a new pesticide that will finally put cockroaches on the endangered species list. After a brief and unpleasant encounter with his landlord, Roger lapses into an inconvenient coma, and his soul enters the body of a lowly roach.

The entire game world is a run-down two-story apartment building. Although the action takes place in only six rooms, each of those rooms contains dozens — sometimes hundreds — of individual screens.



"What's for afters? I'll have a slice of rat tart — without so much rat in it."

Like *Myst, Bad Mojo* is essentially a game of exploration and discovery. As you navigate through its dismal domain using only the four cursor keys, you'll find your movement blocked by boundaries both benign (water, wet paint, assorted slime) and lethal (glue traps, rats, a cat named Franz). Some of these boundaries seem a bit arbitrary; in one scene you can walk (or scurry, actually) right over freshly chopped chunks of meat, while in another you get hopelessly mired in a TV dinner. There are no real dead ends, though, and often you'll be able to push some innocuous object into a helpful bridge-like position. The puzzles are fairly logical, although some do require tedious backtracking.

And even though *Bad Mojo* makes sparing use of full-motion video, it is *not* an "interactive movie." These video segments are completely unintrusive to the gameplay, and usually take the form of clues bestowed by other creatures or memories triggered by certain objects.

This is a truly unique gaming experience, well-conceived and executed, and never frustrating for very long. Like the films of David Lynch, underneath *Bad Mojo*'s arguably repellent exterior lies a yearning story of love and redemption. Still, like a David Lynch film, it's not the sort of thing that will appeal to everyone; you'll need a fairly strong constitution and a thirst for the bizarre to enjoy *Bad Mojo* to its fullest.

—Scott Wolf

PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT

84%

HIGHS: Absolutely unique; well-conceived and executed; intense and disturbing.

LOWS: May be *too* intense & disturbing (and possibly too easy) for some players.

BOTTOM LINE: Until they make a game out of the movie *Eraserhead,* this is as weird as it gets.

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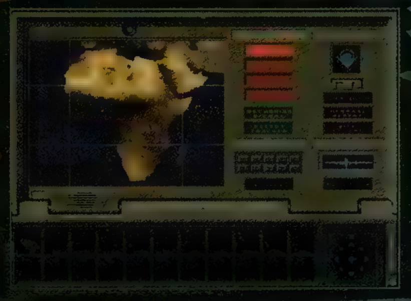

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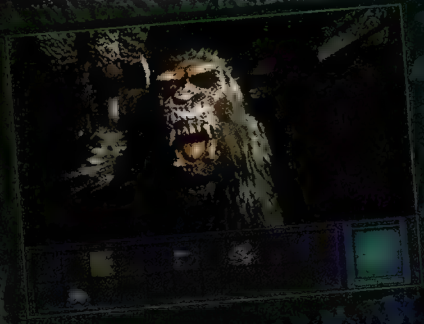
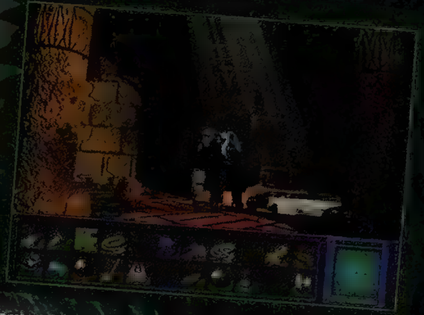


Beware of deadly adversaries lurking in the caves of Zinj



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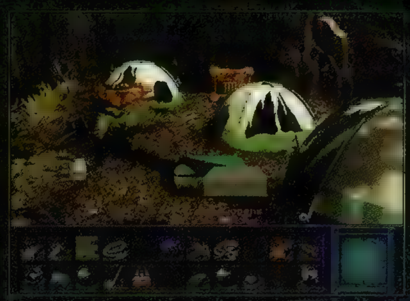

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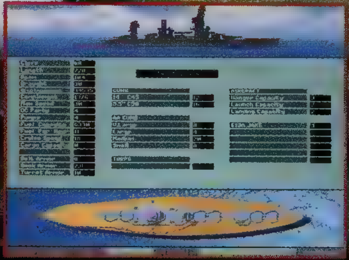

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Product Information Number 162

Hexen: Beyond Heretic

Category: First-person Shooter

Developer: Raven Software

Publisher: id Software/GT Interactive, 16
East 40th St., New York,
NY 10016 (800) 434-2637

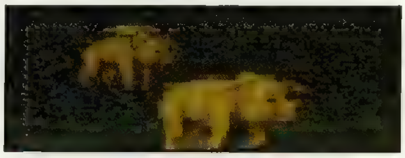
Required	We Recommend
Double-speed CD-ROM drive; 486DX/33; 8MB RAM; 25MB hard-drive space	486DX/66; 16MB RAM; Supported sound card; Joystick

id's and Raven's last go 'round with the *Doom* engine has all the trademark action that puts it at the head of the first-person crowd.

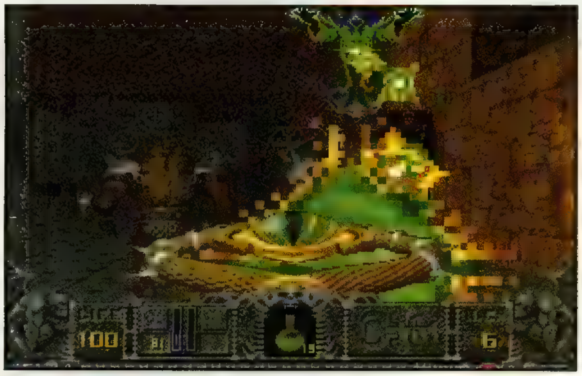
There's a blues player I listen to named Lightnin' Hopkins. He plays the Texas blues. Problem with Lightnin' is, his songs begin to sound ... well ... a lot alike after a while. You pretty much know you're gonna get some slide guitar, some improvised lyrics, a bit of boogie with Lightnin' — and that's about it.

But that's okay, because he does what he does better than anybody, and there's always some unique hook, some cool riff, that keeps you coming back. And while Lightnin' has his imitators, no one pulls it off quite like he does.

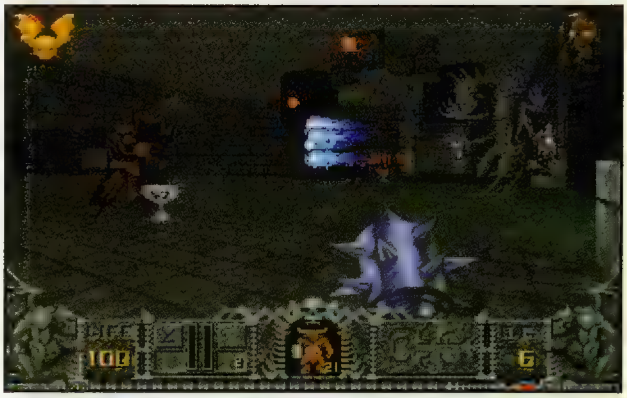
Sort of like id. When they released *Doom*, they hardly knew they were going to inspire an entire industry of copies and clones. They just did what they do better than anybody: they made a fun and challenging action game. With the help of Raven, the people behind *Shadowcaster* and *CyClones*, they also managed to turn their *Doom* engine into *Heretic*, a hot fantasy-action game that took a different look at first-person phenomenon.



Similar to the Morph Ovum spell from *Heretic*, the Porkelator turns all of *Hexen*'s diabolical baddies into harmless livestock.



It's the Bishop! A Dark Bishop meets a serpent's staff and reels from a fatal dose of firepower.



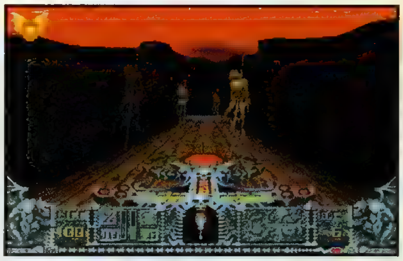
A Dark Servant tries takes on one of the end-level bosses, but you'll need more than these magical beasts to win the fight.

Now id and Raven have returned to the familiar *Heretic* territory with *Hexen: Beyond Heretic.* While it's probably going to be overshadowed as soon as id's own *Quake* hits store shelves, *Hexen* has enough going for it to make it stand out in a crowded marketplace.

Set in *Heretic*'s fantasy realm, *Hexen* begins shortly after you have emerged victorious over the forces of D'Sparil. Of course, a new challenge has arisen, as the two remaining Serpent Riders sow the seeds of destruction in another dimension known as Cronos.

But their evil plans are about to be foiled. On the world of Hexen, humans have learned to control their planet's powerful magic by creating a strict order of three major classes: the Legion (warriors), the Arcanum (magicians), and the Church (magician-warriors). When Hexen is assailed by the second Serpent Rider, it falls to a member of one of these classes to defeat him — which means that when you start a new game, you can choose to play as a fighter, mage, or cleric.

Each type of character has four unique weapons he can accumulate in the course of the game. The fighter has close-range weapons as well as a throwing hammer, meaning he's best at toe-to-toe brawls. The cleric has a combination of weapons, including a mace, firestorm spells, and the incredible Wraithverge, which unleashes ravenous ghosts to tear enemies apart. Mages have entirely spell-based, ranged weapons, such as Frost Shards, which shoot razor-sharp bolts of ice, and the Bloodscourge, which releases spheres that seek out and destroy the enemy.



The obligatory scene of impaled people. It simply wouldn't be an id game be without them.

The option to play as different types of characters adds a great deal to the replayability and enjoyment of *Hexen.* Gamers who like to wade hip-deep into the enemy and smash and slice away will want to play as fighters, while those who like hanging back and dealing death with ranged weapons will prefer the magic of mages. The best to play is probably the cleric, which lets you take both approaches — something that becomes important when those spell recharges get scarce.

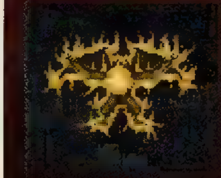
Just like *Heretic*, the world of *Hexen* is beautifully executed, with stained-glass windows and dark labyrinths filled with twisted imagery. This is generally a more foreboding environment than *Heretic*'s, filled with creeping mists and occasional earthquakes, reminiscent at times of Raven's super *Shadowcaster*. And this time around, you can interact with your environment with as much destructive power as you can muster. All those stained glass windows just *beg* to be

A Few of Our Favorite MONSTERS

Just like *Hexen*'s action-packed predecessor, *Heretic*, there's trouble a-brewin' in this savage land, and it's up to you to turn back the tide of evil creatures occupying your home. So to give you a better understanding of what you're up against, here are a few of the beasties you'll want to watch for as you reclaim your land.

Ettin

These hulking beasts look worse than they really are. They populate every level like chiggers, but are pretty easy to dispatch with just a few swipes of your mace.



Afrits

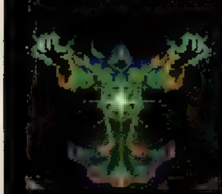
You're walking along a quiet hallway and see a little round ball up ahead. It looks harmless enough until you get close, and it unwraps its bat-like wings, soars toward the ceiling, and begins hurling fireballs at you. These flying menaces pepper the levels with annoying regularity, and will dog your every move until one of you is dead.

Centaur

Half beast, half ... well, not really *man*, but something similar. These powerful and plentiful beasts are found in packs throughout *Hexen*'s levels and can deflect most attacks with their shields. Keep your distance and use a ranged attack, and they'll be reduced to lifeless heaps.

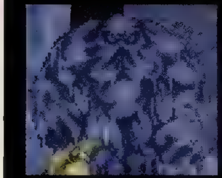
Chaos Serpent

These walking terrors hurl poison gas or spit fireballs. Both have large mouths full of sharp teeth and deliver a nasty, often fatal, bite.



Dark Bishop

Once servants of the Church, but now more powerful as servants of the Serpent Riders. These disciples have magical jade attack missiles that home in and track a foe with deadly accuracy.

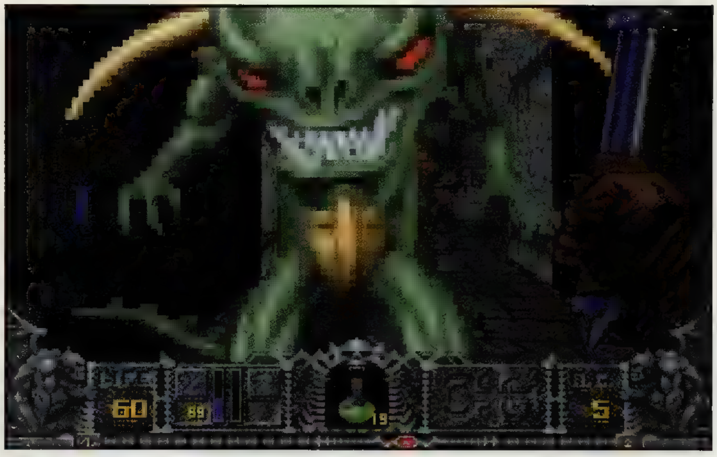


Wendigo

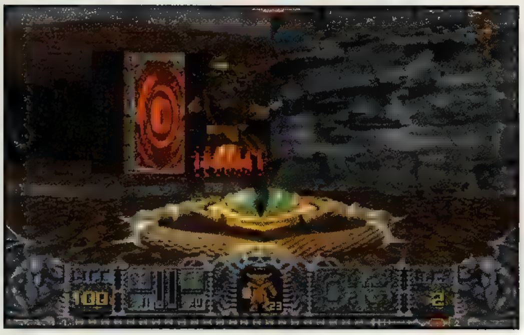
Found only on frozen levels, the Wendigo fires razor-sharp ice shards that can tear an opponent apart at long range. Keep your distance when faced with large groups of these.

Stalkers

Though they can't leave the water, these menacing sea creatures have huge claws and a mean close-in attack. They tend to hide in innocent-looking pools of water and pop up to grab unsuspecting warriors at the worst moments.



A green chaos serpent gets up-close and personal to take a bite out of our hero.



A Dark Servant turns on his maker.

smashed, and it's a pretty good policy to break 'em all, since artifacts and even hidden passageways are often found behind the glass.

The monsters this time out are also more intimidating. The ubiquitous Ettin is pretty easy pickin's, but the spell-wielding Heresiarch and ice-slinging Wendigo make for formidable foes. Altogether, there are about a dozen different monsters and bosses, and they tend to be a lot tougher and more plentiful than those found in *Heretic*. Fortunately, you have quite a few ways of keeping on top of them.

Aside from the weapons you collect along the way, there are countless artifacts and items to help you out. Of course, there are the usual range of power-ups, armor, and health elixirs, but you also get such items as Dragonskin Bracers (adds four points to your armor), Boots of Speed (temporary burst of speed), Wings of Wraith (flight), and Disc of Repulsion (which deflects everything in a certain radius). Flechettes are found in abundance, and these little green vials work differently for each class: for mages, they act like bombs; for fighters, they're hand grenades; and for clerics, they unleash clouds of poison gas.

One of the best power-ups is The Dark Servant, which conjures up a nasty Minotaur (just like the end-level baddie in *Heretic*'s first episode) who ruthlessly attacks anything in its path for thirty seconds. And for rendering nasties harmless, nothing beats the Porkelator, which turns monsters into cute little pigs.

There's enough variety in the special items, critters and action to keep *Hexen* interesting even though gameplay is, ultimately, very familiar. Sure, you can look up and down, fly, and turn people into ham, but it's still just another first-person shooter, albeit a very well-executed one. It would have been refreshing to see Raven create something closer to *Shadowcaster* with this technology: more story, more puzzles, more surprises. As it is, we get a good action game with lots of atmosphere and plenty of fast-moving death-dealing. What more could a *Doom*-obsessed world ask for?

Well, maybe one thing: as Lightnin' sang, "Oh, bring me my shotgun / And boy, you can bring me quite a few shells." *That* would show those Dark Bishops who's boss.

— *T. Liam McDonald*

PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT

85%

HIGHS: Beautifully executed, with a wide variety of weapons and non-stop action. Many novel twists.

LOWS: Gameplay is limited to the same mindless slaughter found in previous shooters. Not many secrets or puzzles.

BOTTOM LINE: A solid action game with terrific fantasy trappings, but ultimately familiar gameplay.

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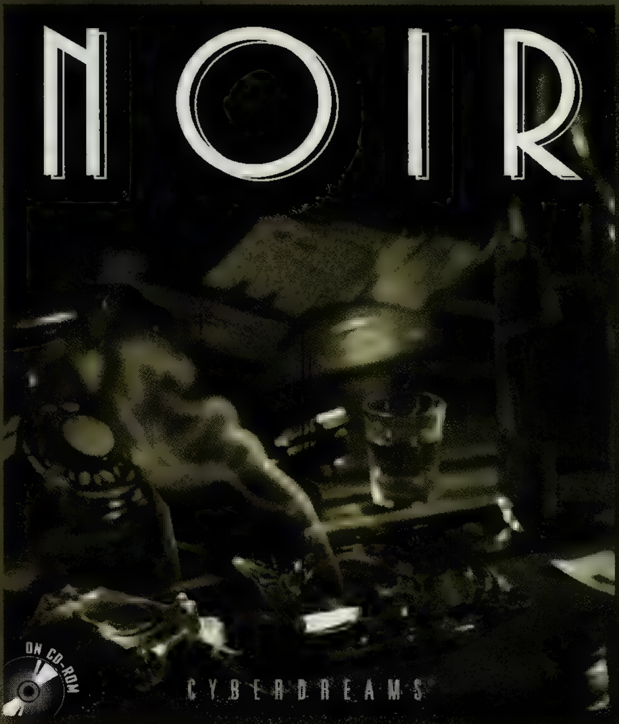
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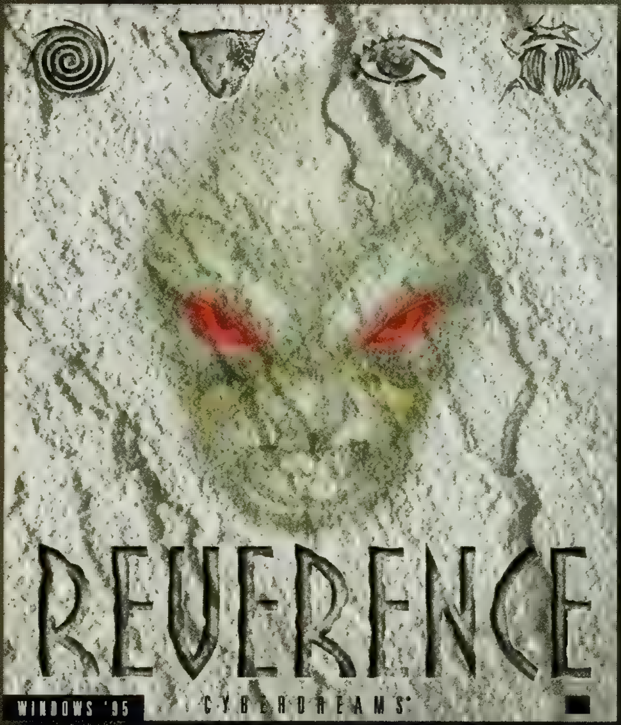
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Stonekeep

Category: Roleplaying

Developer: Interplay

Publisher: Interplay, 17922 Fitch Ave.,
Irvine, CA 92714
(714) 553-6678

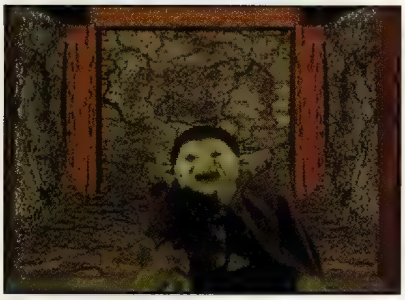
Required	We Recommend
Double-speed CD-ROM drive; 386/40; 4MB RAM; VGA; Mouse	486/50; 8MB RAM; Supported sound card

Stonekeep proves that no matter how much time is spent in development, it's all for naught if the fun's not there.

After nearly seven years of product development, design changes, and platform shifts, Interplay's roleplaying adventure, *Stonekeep*, is finally out. And while it's a decent offering for roleplaying novices, it's far from the magnum opus you'd expect in a project that's been so long in coming.

The game puts you into the role of Drake, a former citizen of the renowned citadel of Stonekeep. It opens with an idyllic movie portraying the contented population of the keep — but before long, the peaceful lassitude is broken by the appearance of a shadowy giant, heralded by a wave a darkness that strips flesh from bone as it spreads over the land. Drake is mysteriously spirited away before he can be overtaken by the dark power, and the keep crumbles into the earth.

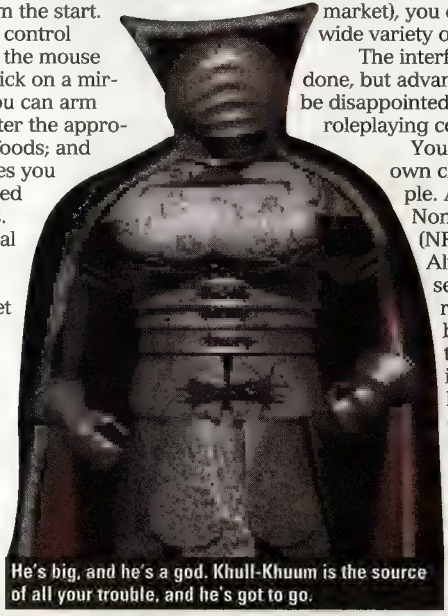
Ten years later, an adult Drake returns to his ancestral home and is visited by the fairy-like goddess Thera. She tells him he must shed his mortal shell to enter the realm of Stonekeep, retrieve the nine orbs of power, battle the dark god Khull-Khuum, and set the castle free.



Wahooka supposedly is the King of the Faeries. He's a greedy little guy, so give him some treasure, and he'll give you some useful information.

While the story is pretty standard fare, this opening is enough to get you revved up for a great adventure, and Interplay did an excellent job of creating an easy and intuitive interface that lets you get into the action right from the start. The arrow keys control movement, and the mouse does the rest: click on a mirror icon, and you can arm yourself or administer the appropriate potions and foods; and a magical scroll gives you access to an unlimited inventory of objects.

A handy journal keeps track of the story of Drake and the friends he'll meet on the way (he can travel with as many as three companions) as well as any items or magical runes he discovers. And an efficient and easy-to-use automap lets you make even more notes as you travel.

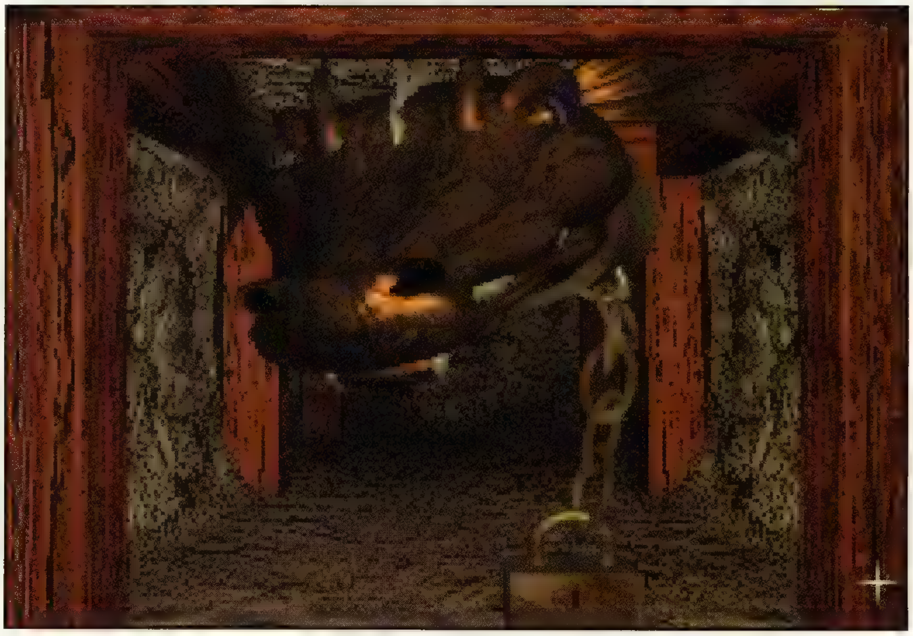


He's big, and he's a god. Khull-Khuum is the source of all your trouble, and he's got to go.

The magic system in *Stonekeep* is also simple, but it has enough variety to keep it from being dull. Magical runes are found on scrolls, and if you have a rune stick charged with enough magical energy (called mana, as in practically every other RPG on the market), you can use it to cast a wide variety of spells.

The interface is very well done, but advanced roleplayers may be disappointed by the lack of a few roleplaying conventions.

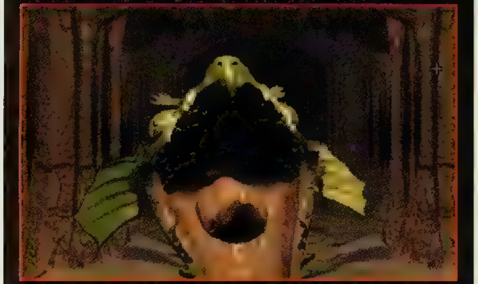
You can't create your own character, for example. And interaction with Non-Player Characters (NPCs) is minimal. Although this can be seen as a pleasant relief from endless branching dialogue trees, more direct interaction would have been nice. The characters that join your party will help you out when things get rough, and they'll chime in with helpful quips when appropriate, but it's far from the level of interaction



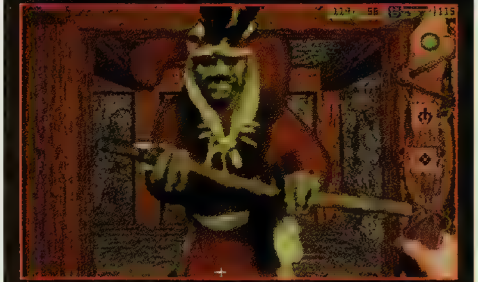
You'll need to free this dragon at some point in the game. She may be big, but she's quite polite.

Stonekeep CREEPS

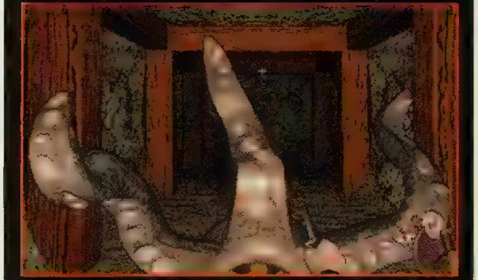
From the very first level of *Stonekeep*, you'll meet all kinds of interesting creatures. Here's some that you can expect to see as you delve deep into the keep:



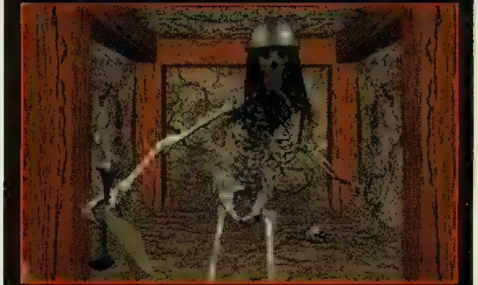
These snakes don't just have a big bite; they can be poisonous as well. An axe does a good job of making mincemeat of them.



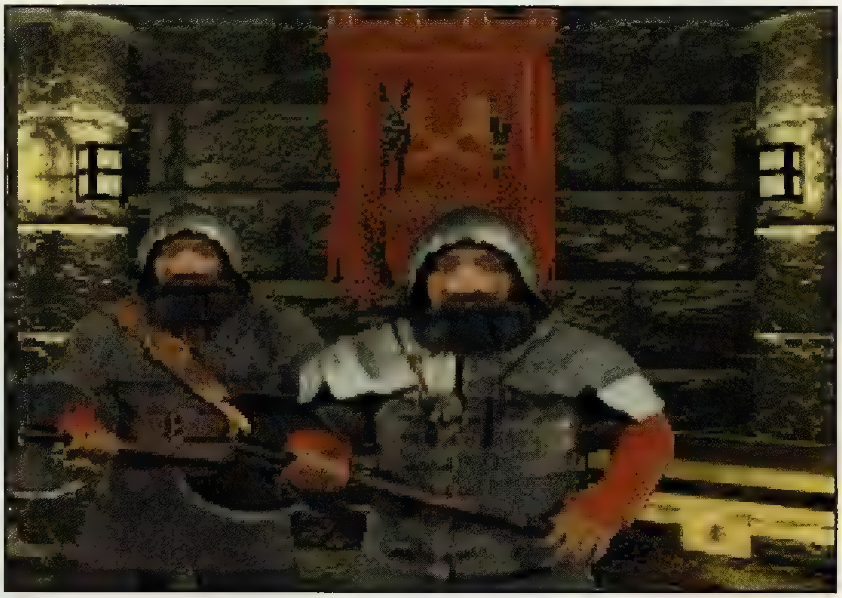
The Throgs hold sway over the Shargas in the underworld. Here's one of their shamans — not a creature to be toyed with.



These tentacled creatures are straight out of nightmare, and they're some of the toughest creatures at this level. If you want to live long against these guys, keep moving around as you attack.



The infamous skeleton creature. One of the first monsters created for the game, he's a tough one to beat.



Once you reach the Dwarven Realm, you'll be able to relax a little with your stumpy friends.

you'd expect from a contemporary RPG.

The graphics, while impressive at the start, seem to drag a bit as you get deeper into the game. The digitized video and 3D-rendered dungeons are very pretty, but they get boring in short order. It takes a good bit of time to go through a single level, and any given spot on a level looks very much like every other spot. The only variation is the occasional secret panel, a pile of debris, or some piece of furniture, to break the monotony.

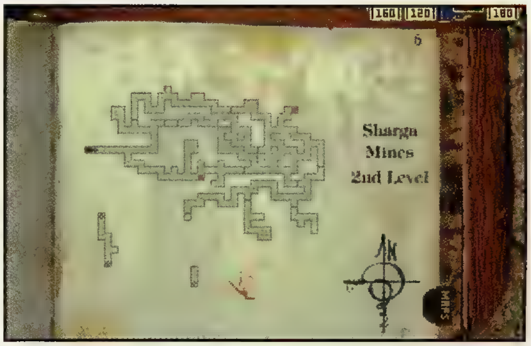
Even worse, when you finally advance to the next level of the dungeon, excited and expecting to see something different and unique, you may very well find more of the same.

On the other hand, the creatures you encounter are fabulously done. Some are actors, filmed in costumes and makeup (which looks better than it may sound), and others are computer generated.

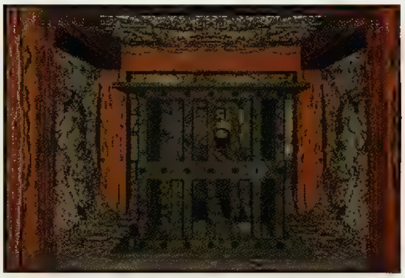
But *Stonekeep* fails to provide the most important ingredient of any game — especially a roleplaying game. Considering that the average computer RPG takes at least 60 hours of playing time to complete — longer if you're careful about finding every little secret — it needs to be *fun*. After 40 hours, you'd better be entertained if you're going to keep at it until you reach the end.

Although *Stonekeep* is a new experience with its digitized video and stereo sound, the fun fades after the first few hours. You begin to notice how everything looks and feels the same. The game turns into a hack-and-slash dungeon crawl, where your only job is to wander a maze, pick things up, and get to the exit of the level. Even the interesting parts of the story are spread too thinly to keep things exciting. In the case of *Stonekeep*, it's simply not enough to keep you going.

—*Mike Wolf*



When you get the journal, you'll have access to an invaluable automap. You'll be referring to it often as you make your way through the labyrinths of *Stonekeep*.



One of the sub-quests in the game is rescuing this dwarf from imprisonment. He'll fight valiantly at your side if you free him.

PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT

77%

HIGHS: Fantastic sound effects, nice graphics, intuitive and simple interface.

LOWS: It's just not *fun* in the long term, and the graphics and sound can't carry it.

BOTTOM LINE: It's certainly not the best RPG out there, but if you're a roleplaying fanatic, it might be worth your while.

(figure 1)

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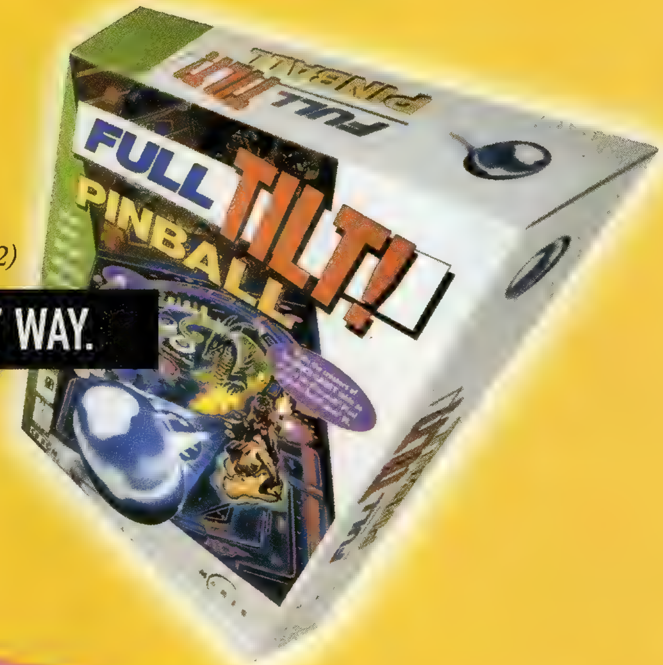

(figure 2)

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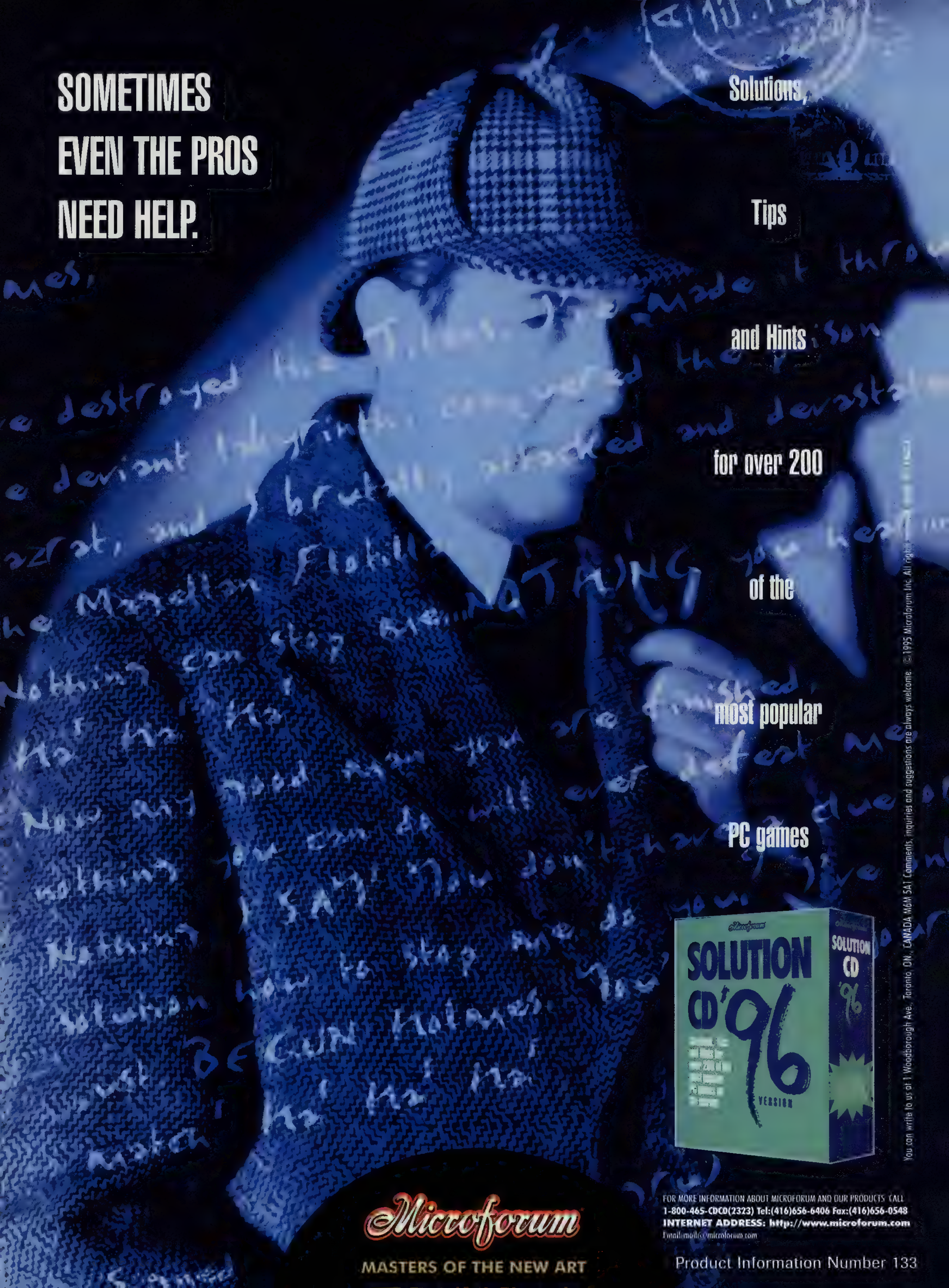
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TekWar

Category: First-person Shooter

Developer: Capstone

Publisher: Capstone, 501 Brickell Key Drive, 6th Floor, Miami, FL 33131 (305) 373-7700

Required	We Recommend
Double-speed CD-ROM drive; 486/50; 8MB RAM; 50MB hard-drive space	Pentium; 16MB RAM; SVGA; Supported sound card; Joystick or gamepad

Despite some innovative features and an impressive game engine, *TekWar* just doesn't make it as an exciting shoot-'em-up.

The year is 2045, and you're a former cop, placed in a cryogenic capsule as punishment for a crime you didn't commit. When a deadly new drug called Tek begins to take hold of the populace, you're thawed out and offered one chance to clear your name. Your mission: capture seven Teklords and stop their plans to distribute Tek through a sophisticated world-wide computer network known as the Matrix.

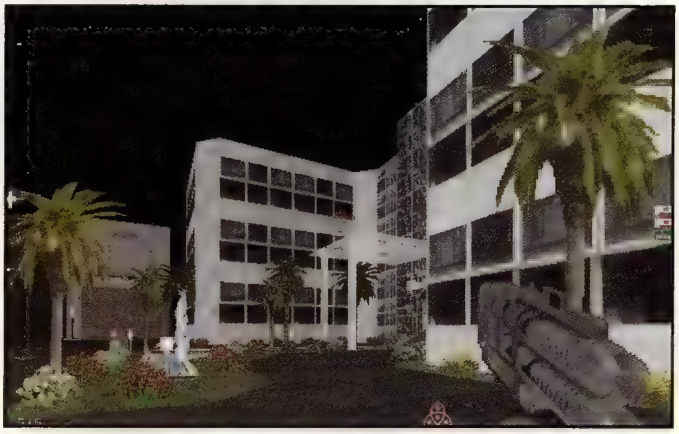
That's the basic premise for *TekWar*, which borrows its name and settings from the *TekWar* novels and TV series created by William Shatner. *TekWar* sounds like a terrific foundation for an action game, but you'll find that once the shooting starts, anything resembling a story fades into the background.

Like countless other *Doom*-clones, *TekWar* has you running around, shooting the bad guys with a variety of weapons, collecting keycards, opening doors, and trying to find and then defeat each level's Teklord. But instead of shooting everything that moves, *TekWar* tries to add a bit of depth to its futuristic cities by throwing a few innocents into the mix; there are police and civilians wandering through each level, and if you draw your gun or start shooting, civilians will cringe, and the police will attack.

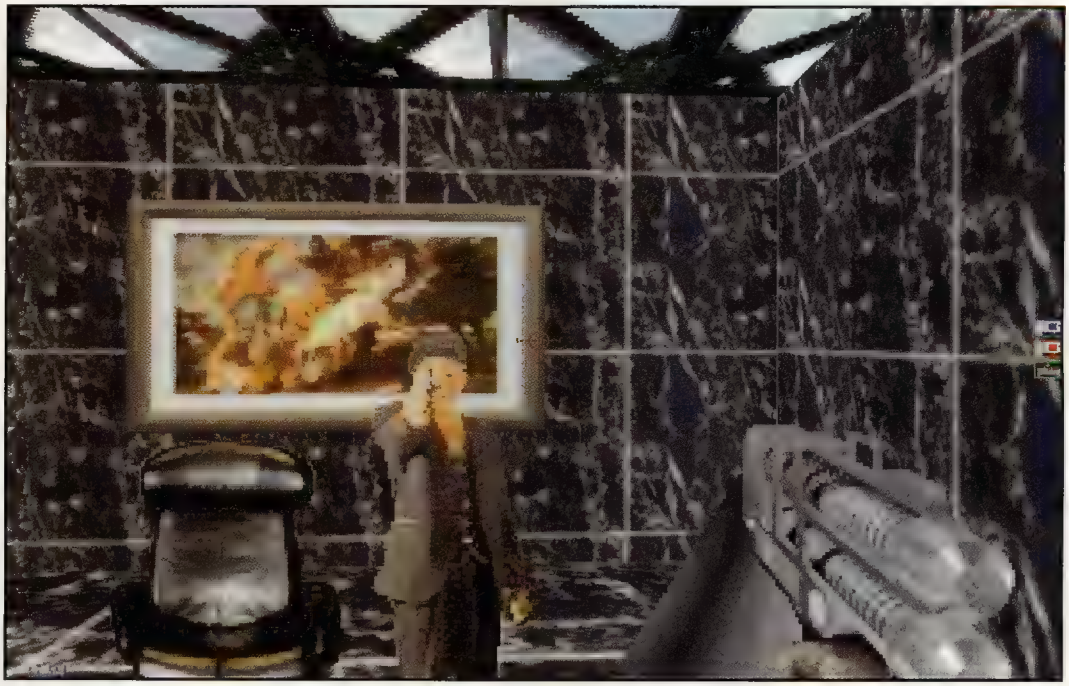
While this could potentially offer some much-needed intensity to the usual kill-or-be-killed scenario, Capstone didn't make the most of the opportunity. There are no real consequences for stepping outside of the lines and mowing down countless civilians, and the police go merrily about their business as soon as you put your weapon away, as if there was something horribly wrong with their short-term memory.

Once you've had your fun shooting up helpless bystanders and taking potshots at the cops, you'll begin to work your way through the mission at hand. Unfortunately, gameplay is unnecessarily frustrating and vague. A good first-person shooter has to be a fast-paced, explosive gunfight, and *TekWar* is not. The enemies aren't at all intelligent; they simply stand in their assigned spots and blast away, and they don't even follow you.

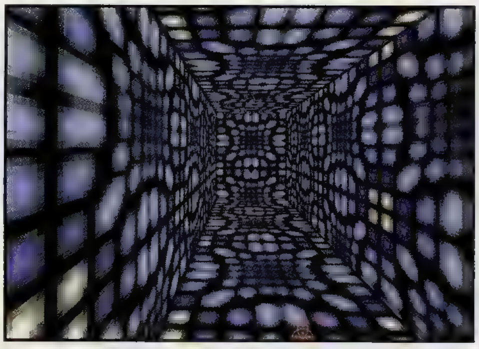
Adding to the frustration is the fact that these enemies can fire at you from three blocks away without missing — often before you can even see them, let alone aim at them. You can't even dodge effectively; all you can do is slog toward them and hope you can kill them before they kill you.



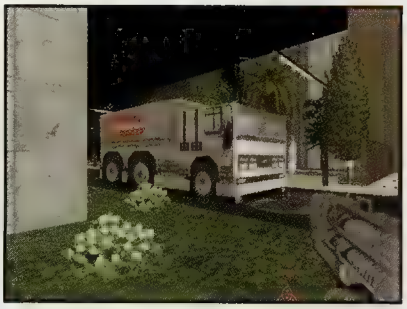
***TekWar* puts you in a futuristic version of Los Angeles, filled with citizens, police and tekgoons galore.**



This is one of the seven Teklords you must defeat. Beat him, and you can enter the Matrix.



You can enter and play in the Matrix as well, after defeating a Teklord and gaining a Matrix key.



This truck actually circles through the city on a regular basis, and you can hop a ride if you're lucky. But if you don't watch out, you might get run over.

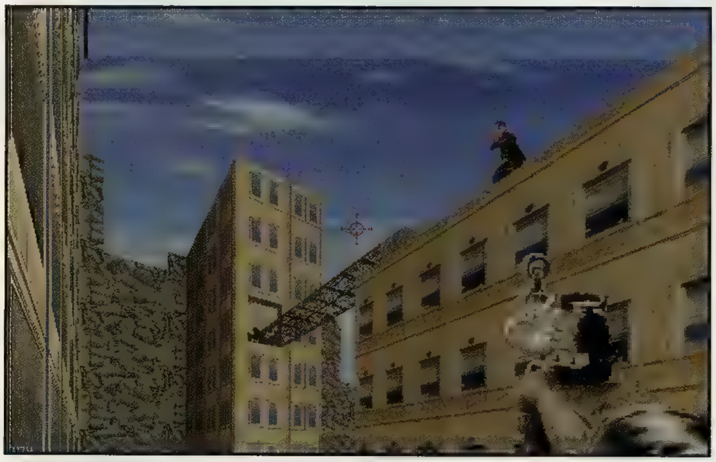
As for the goal of finding those Teklords hidden somewhere in the city, you're on your own. There are no clues to lead you to them, no one to talk to or interact with — even William Shatner isn't telling (he appears in full-motion video sequences between missions). You'll only find them by meticulously exploring every room and closet on the level, long after you have gunned down every other inhabitant.

And when you finally *do* stumble across a Teklord, there isn't even a sense of accomplishment. They never speak; they don't even surrender — instead, you shoot them and the level ends with a whimper, not a bang. For all practical purposes, these Teklords might as well be exit switches.

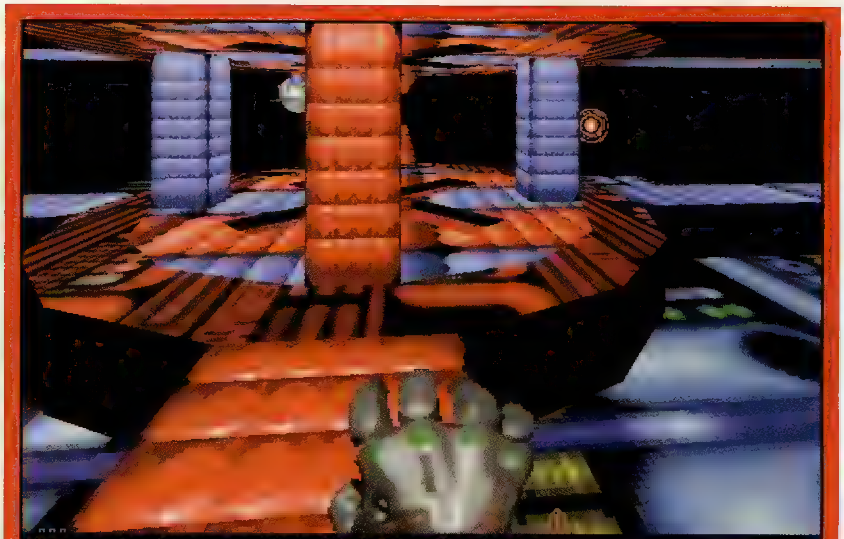
Much of the game seems to have been rushed, with features that seem to be incomplete or disabled. For example, the manual mentions grenades among the weapons you can find and use — but if you read the text file included with the game, you find that the grenades have been "changed." Perhaps that explains the strange blue objects lying around which you can't pick up, shoot, or activate in any way.

TekWar is a decent, playable first-person shooter (especially if you have a high-end machine and you don't mind its slow pace). It's even enjoyable just to walk through the city and admire the graphics. Ultimately, though, you'll wish there was better action and more variety, and less roaming in an eternal quest for keys.

—*Jason Bates*



The enemies in *TekWar* will snipe at you from rooftops and other hiding places in the city, so keep your eyes open.



This powerglove lets you attack in the Matrix. Gather the red spheres for glove ammo; avoid the robots.

GETTING STARTED IN TEKWAR

If you're having trouble finishing the first mission in *TekWar*, here's a brief walkthrough that'll get you started. First, you'll need to take the subway train and ride until you reach its second stop. (Hint: if you're having a trouble figuring out where the subway is going, use TAB and turn on the automap. Zoom out a little, and you'll see what stops the subway actually visits in the current mission.)

Get off the train and walk toward the center of the city until you see what looks like a column of light shining from under a porch opposite the Conglomo building; there is a drug lab down below. Kill all the chemists and stock up on weapons; one of the chemists has the blue key card.

Now go to the Conglomo building, shoot out the window on the right, and jump in. The female terrorist has the red key card.

Go through the Conglomo building and out the back, and locate the pool hall. In the pool room there is a red card lock on the wall with no apparent door. Use the red key on the lock, and a secret door will open, then take the elevator down. You can shoot out the ceiling laser, then activate the blue card lock which will take you into Marty Dollar's office.

Shatner will tell you you've done a good job, and you'll be back at the screen with the seven Teklords. From here, you can enter the Matrix by hitting the up arrow and pressing enter.

Much of the Matrix is quite dark, so use the automap to find the passages. Use the "8" key to activate your glove, and pick up the red glowing spheres you'll find scattered around. The jump and crouch keys allow you to levitate up and down in cyberspace.

PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT

74%

HIGHS: Sharp, living game world with moving vehicles and innocent civilians.

LOWS: Unsophisticated combat, inaccurate manual, tedious searches, and flat special effects.

BOTTOM LINE: It's a fun game to play on a high-end machine — at least for a little while — but it's no *Doom*-killer.

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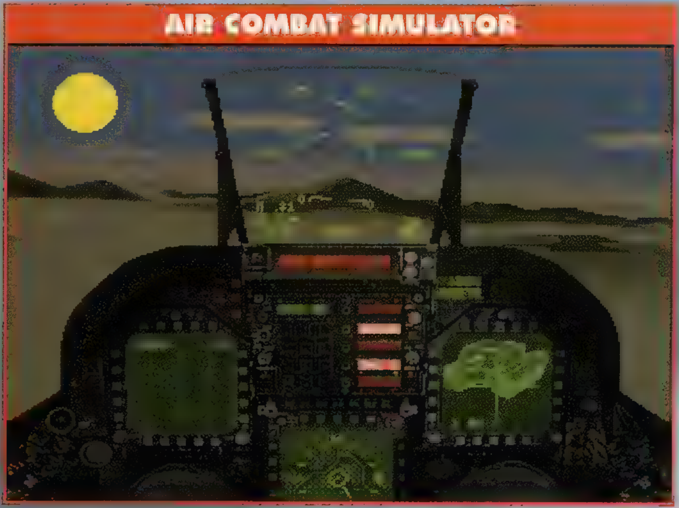

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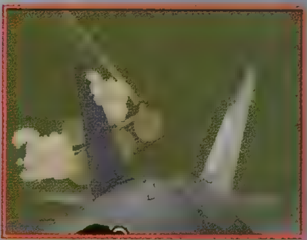

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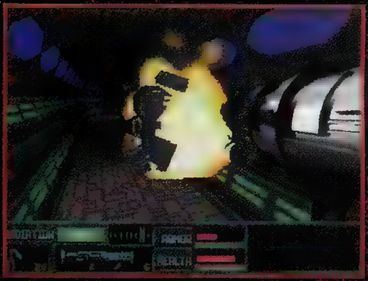
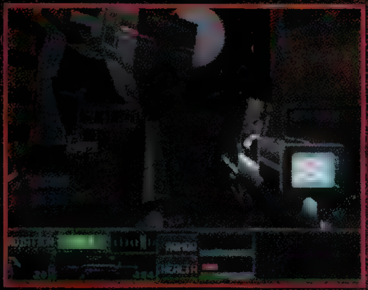
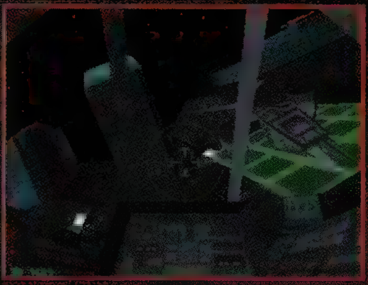

Kill

Drive


Die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Mission Critical

Category: Adventure Game
Developer: Legend Entertainment
Publisher: Legend Entertainment, P.O. Box 10810, 14200 Park Meadow Dr., Chantilly, VA 22021 (703) 222-8500

Required	We Recommend
Double-speed CD-ROM drive; 486DX/33; 8MB RAM; Sound Blaster compatible sound card; Mouse	16MB RAM; Quad-speed CD-ROM drive

Beautiful visuals and a thought-provoking plot make this sci-fi graphic adventure stand out from the crowd.

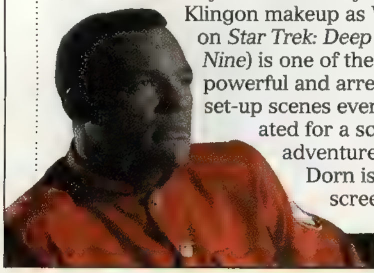
The year is 2134 A.D. Sixty-eight light years from Earth, the Navy cruiser *Lexington*, escorting a research ship packed with high-tech gear and scientists, assumes orbit around the newly discovered planet Persephone. The ship's mission is so secret, only three people aboard are supposed to know its real purpose.

After a century of peace, war has again broken out on Earth and in space, between the powerful United Nations coalition and a rebel alliance dedicated to the free and unhampered development of technology.

The *Lexington* is among those rebel ships attempting to break the UN's hold on the Earth. But the mission has been betrayed by an on-board spy, and the *Lexington* suddenly finds itself ambushed by a superior UN force. Out-gunned and forced to surrender, the captain of the *Lexington* smuggles a nuclear warhead on board one of the ship's shuttles and detonates it just as the UN ship opens its bays to receive its new prisoners. The resulting detonation destroys the UN warship and every member of the *Lexington*'s crew — except one.

Enter the player, who wakes up on Deck 2 of the *Lexington* only to learn, from last-minutes messages left for him, that he alone must attempt to finish the ship's mission. The outcome of the war — perhaps the very fate of humanity itself — depends on it.

This opening sequence, featuring actor Michael Dorn as Captain Dayna (more commonly seen these days in his Klingon makeup as Worf, on *Star Trek: Deep Space Nine*) is one of the most powerful and arresting set-up scenes ever created for a sci-fi adventure game. Dorn is on-screen only for about fifteen minutes, but he makes a great deal out of a relatively small part, as indeed do his colleagues — especially Patricia Charbonneau, who portrays the *Lexington*'s executive officer.



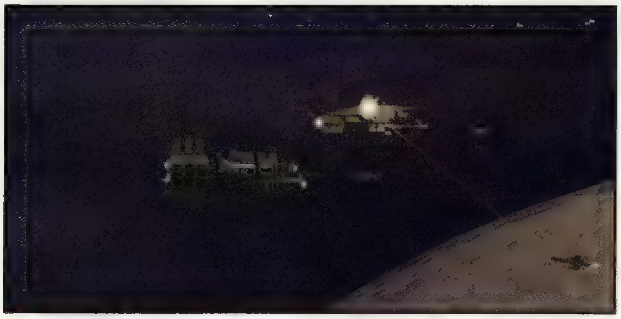
Michael Dorn, best known as Star Trek's Worf, delivers a powerful performance.

Mission Critical is a fine addition to the short list of really enthralling sci-fi games. Writer/designer Mike Verdu (co-author of an award-winning graphic adventure based on Frederick Pohl's *Gateway*) has crafted a taut, intelligent story in the "hard" science fiction vein. He presents some strong philosophical questions: How will humanity react when humans achieve the ability to create superior sentient intelligence? What are the darker ramifications of unchecked technological progress? If what we think of as "memory" is the primary component of consciousness, do we die when it vanishes, or can self-awareness be artificially manipulated?

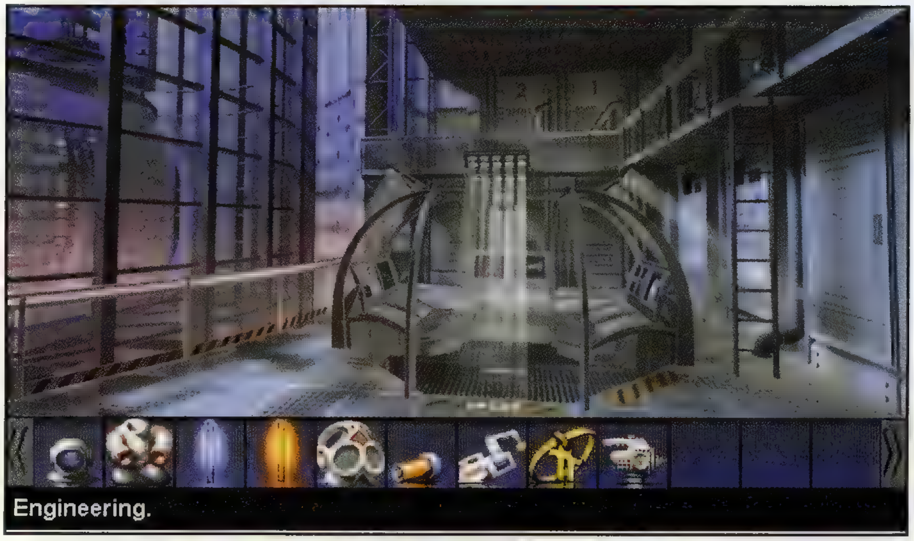
From the start, the player faces high odds and dangerous challenges: the ship is without communications, the computers are off-line, battle damage to the hull is sucking the air out into space, the nuclear powerplant is near meltdown, and all the weapons systems are down. It's a sure bet that the UN has already dispatched warships to find out what happened out there near Persephone, and how can one man hope to defeat them?

As you explore the deserted corridors and begin to put together bits and pieces of the puzzle, you'll eventually discover what the critical mission of the title is, who the traitor was, and what you need to do to get to the surface of Persephone.

First things first, however (as the jangling alarm bells and sirens keep reminding you): you must locate the site of the hull-breach and repair it, figure out how to get some coolant into the reactor before it reaches



Movie-like scenes of intense combat both open and close the game.



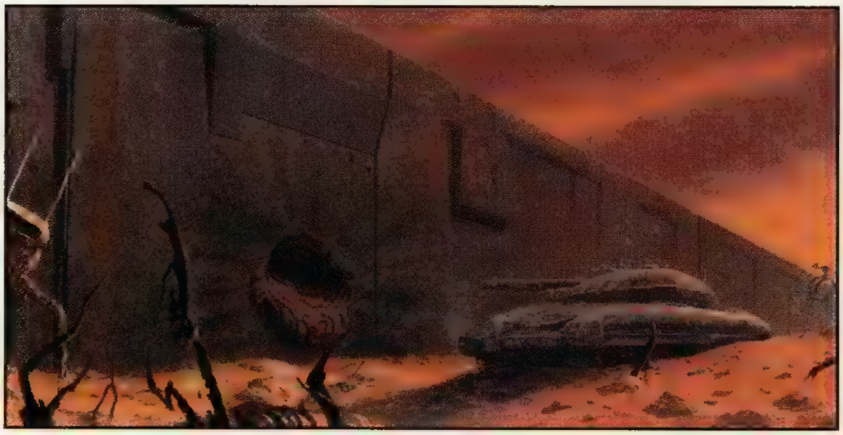
The Engineering section of the *Lexington*: before ascending that ladder, you might want to check for useful items in the unlabeled storage bin on the right.

critical mass, and make a dangerous walk out on the hull to fix a damaged antenna.

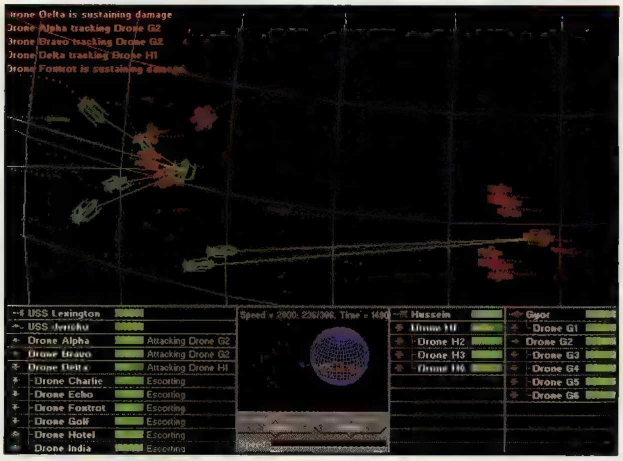
Once you've done that, and established contact with the Navy (through a complex series of down-links that forms another one of the game's tougher puzzles), you'll learn about a potent prototype weapon, one that establishes a neural link between the human brain and the ship's battle-drones. Using that system will give you a fighting chance against the UN fleet, but there is one minor drawback — anybody who uses it will eventually die, as the micro-circuitry-laden serum gradually dismantles his brain cells.

If you survive the UN counterattack and can figure out how to summon a landing ship to the *Lexington*'s shuttle bay, the climax of your adventure takes place on the surface of Persephone. There, you must explore a vast, eerie, alien structure; decode the procedure needed to generate a race of sentient electro-mechanical beings; and finally, pass through a kind of "stargate" built by the critters, for a heavy-duty confrontation with alien life-forms.

I suspect the climactic segment of *Mission Critical* may engender some controversy: it is *very* wordy and philosophical, and gamers who demand lots of slam-bang action as a pay-off may feel short-changed. Personally, I found the dialogue with the aliens to be good, mature, thought-provoking sci-fi, wordy or not. And the closing segment of the game, assuming you buy into the proposition the aliens make you, is movingly elegiac.



That wrecked tank might still have enough juice in its batteries to punch a hole clean through that otherwise-impenetrable wall....



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rone Delta is sustaining damage
Drone Alpha tracking Drone G2
Drone Bravo tracking Drone G2
Drone Delta tracking Drone H1
Drone Foxtrot is sustaining damage
```

Some players may be disappointed that the climactic battle against the UN fleet is rendered in this style, but at least it's very well done for what it is.

Mission Critical is a classically linear adventure, with short-term goals that ensure your survival and contribute to the over-arching objective of finishing the Persephone mission. There's a lot of to-ing and fro-ing down corridors, into rooms and compartments, etc., but the game is structured with a generous amount of reinforcement, and once you learn the basic challenges, it does not suddenly throw you into no-way-out situations. But it *is* easy to take wrong turns or perform tasks out of sequence, with frustrating consequences, so you'd better follow the old adage: save your game early and often.

The graphics are superior throughout, from the gray utilitarian corridors of the *Lexington* to the M.C. Escher-like interior of the alien structure on Persephone. Movie-like space combat sequences at the start and finish of the game are excellent, but some gamers might be a little disappointed (as I was) that the mid-game engagement with the UN fleet is rendered only in terms of blips and data on computer screens.

The online tutorial is more of a disappointment, consisting mostly of bland, generic advice ("Pick up anything that's not nailed down" isn't exactly revelatory news).

On the other hand, Legend has designed a superb interface for this big, big game, one that's as transparent as spring water. Two-thirds of your screen is given over to uncluttered first-person views. If you click on something you can take, open, look at, etc., a few simple verbs pop up in the upper left corner; you just choose and action and click. Below the main view is a scrolling inventory list. Unobtrusive drop-down menus handle utility functions like saving, restoring, or adjusting the volume of music and sound effects. The little "map" icon is also extremely useful, as it displays the whole deck you're on and your position, even if you haven't visited every location.

Mission Critical is a big, sleek, handsome science fiction adventure that blends traditional adventure challenges with a hard-science edge and some provocative philosophical concepts. Gamers who crave lots of zap-the-aliens action have plenty of other games to choose from, but for those who seek a more thoughtful kind of adventure, it delivers the goods.

—William R. Trotter

PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT

85%

HIGHS: Fine graphics and sound, silky interface, good acting, exceptional script.

LOWS: Inadequate online help, a bit too much corridor-prowling between the more intense sequences, and an anti-climatic ending.

BOTTOM LINE: A mature and thought-provoking adventure that plays the way a good science fiction novel reads.

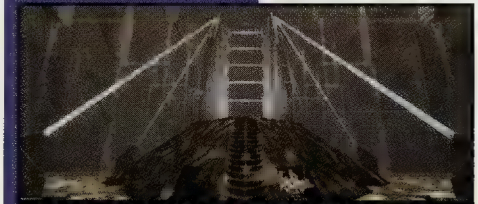
UPS AND DOWNS

You'll spend a *lot* of time using the *Lexington*'s elevator system, and in a game of this size, it's easy to lose track of exactly where you've been or where you want to go next. To save you time and some possible frustration, here's a sequential list of elevator destinations, from the start of the game to the point where you leave the ship and descend to the planet's surface:

The game begins on Deck 2. Read the captain's note, turn on the first computer terminal you see, ask all the listed questions, and you'll get information on where to find a hull-patching kit (the glue, by the way, goes on the *patch*, not on the bulkhead). Once you've explored the wardroom, storage room, and captain's quarters, and have successfully patched the hull breach, your tour of duty on the elevators begins. To avoid wasting time or taking an action out of sequence, you'll want to visit the other decks in this order:

- Deck 3
- Deck 2
- Deck 5
- Reactor Spaces
- Deck 6
- Deck 2
- Deck 5
- Deck 6
- Deck 2
- Bridge
- Weapons Bay
- Bridge
- Deck 6 (Shuttle Bay)

From there on, the action moves to the endgame on Persephone.



The "stargate" on Persephone; step right through to meet interesting, if long-winded, aliens, and experience one of the *weirdest* puzzles in the history of adventure-gaming.

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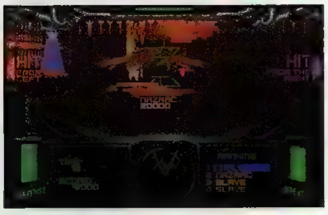

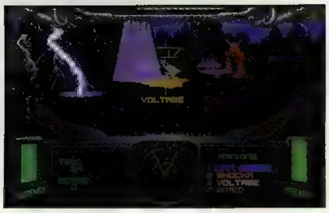

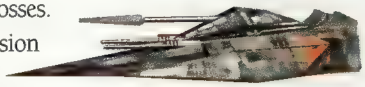

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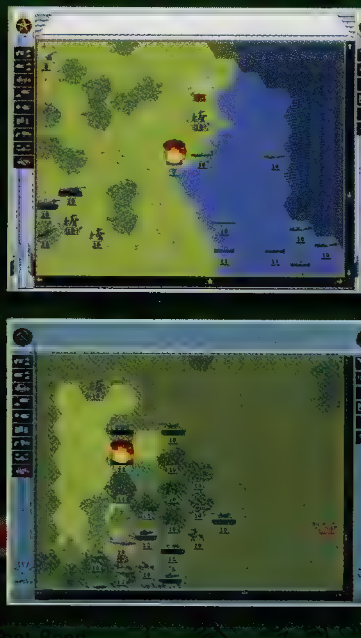

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Product Information Number 163

Great Naval Battles Vol. IV

Category: Naval simulation

Developer: Strategic Simulations, Inc.

Publisher: SSI, 675 Almanor Ave, Suite 201,
Sunnyvale, CA 94086-2901
(800) 601-7529

The Great Naval Battles series now reaches an apparent climax with an engrossing simulation of battles that *might* have taken place.

Required	We Recommend
Double-speed CD-ROM drive; 486/33; 4MB RAM; 14MB hard-drive space; SVGA	Quad-speed CD-ROM drive; Pentium; 8MB RAM; Mouse

Fans of naval surface warfare were the last sub-set of gamers to reap the advantages of the quantum jump in PC game technology that took place in the early 1990s. I still remember the excitement I felt when I peeled the shrinkwrap from SSI's *Great Naval Battles of the North Atlantic*, back in the autumn of 1992. At last, my prayers were answered.

Well ... it was a start, anyway. The first game was buggy, crash-prone, and a bit tentative in design — you could tell SSI was inching into uncharted waters. Game patches and expansion modules followed, including a scenario builder that allowed you to deploy "super ships" like the Nazi carrier *Graf Zeppelin* and the magnificent British "Vanguard" class battleships.

In 1993 came *GNB Vol. II*, a Pacific Theater sim that was considerably bigger and more ambitious, involving carrier task forces, amphibious ops, and island bases. It proved something of a flop, due to an overly complicated interface, more bugs, and some awkward design compromises.

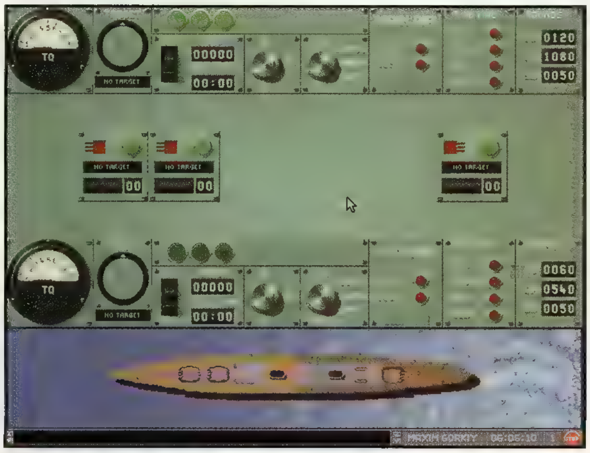
SSI persisted, though, and with *GNB III* (perhaps the third time's the charm?), they hit one out of the ballpark. The interface, though still complex, was logical and clean, and the great Pacific campaigns were brought vividly to life.

Now, in its fourth volume, subtitled *Burning Steel*, the series returns to the European Theater. To those who already have the previous games, the obvious question is "why bother?"

As any military history buff can tell you, there were not a lot of big fleet engagements in European waters, and while it's nice to reprise the Bismarck/Hood encounter or the River Plate saga of the *Graf Spee* with much-improved graphics, the question still remains, has SSI been able to come up with enough new and different scenarios to make this game worth the money?

It is, if you like "alternate history" scenarios, those enticing might-have-beens that so fascinate military history fans. SSI has shuffled the deck of historical possibilities and come up with a number of plausible encounters that make for exciting, big-scale naval action. Suppose the French Navy had disobeyed the Vichy government and come out fighting from its Mediterranean bases, taking on either the Royal Navy or the Italian fleet (both possibilities are included).

And for the first time in *any* PC game, the Soviet Navy makes an appearance in two fascinating scenarios: In the first, titled "Black Sea," the Soviet Black Sea Fleet, along with remnants of the British Mediterranean Fleet, make a last ditch stand against the combined Italian/French fleets in the summer of 1942; the second scenario, "Leningrad, '41" is based on the premise that the Germans did not suffer heavy naval losses in the Norwegian campaign and could muster a powerful Baltic task force against the numerous but amazingly ragtag assortment of Red Navy ships based in Riga and Leningrad.



The cruiser *Maxim Gorgy* sails out to defend the Motherland — no other PC game lets you command the valiant but ragtag Soviet Navy.

Convoy protection is a major ingredient in many battles. You can refight the debacle of PQ-17, only this time the Royal Navy doesn't lose its nerve.

Unfortunately, a few real-world dilemmas do arrive to spoil some of the fun, through a number of annoying bugs. The screen goes black periodically, and in the "Jutland 1940" scenario my French aircraft carrier kept running the "refueling" cycle over and over again, despite the fact that the planes it was ostensibly refueling were *not aboard the ship*. In fact, they simply vanished from the game — my entire complement of dive bombers! The dreaded "North Sea Triangle," perhaps?

Admittedly, this installment doesn't have the built-in appeal of the big, sweeping Pacific campaigns, but I found it every bit as interesting. And the scenario editor allows your imagination free reign to design customized battles, deploying up to 50 ships per side.

If you liked Vol. III, and have a fascination for the whole "alternate history" concept, you'll get your money's worth with *Burning Steel*, but if you were expecting a complete revamp of the genre, you'll have to look elsewhere.

—*William R. Trotter*

PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT

79%

HIGHS: Great graphics, sound; a fascinating range of historical might-have-beens.

LOWS: It's still a very complicated sim, especially if you haven't played the previous installments.

BOTTOM LINE: If you're really into the subject, you'll have a great time changing history.

The Martian Chronicles

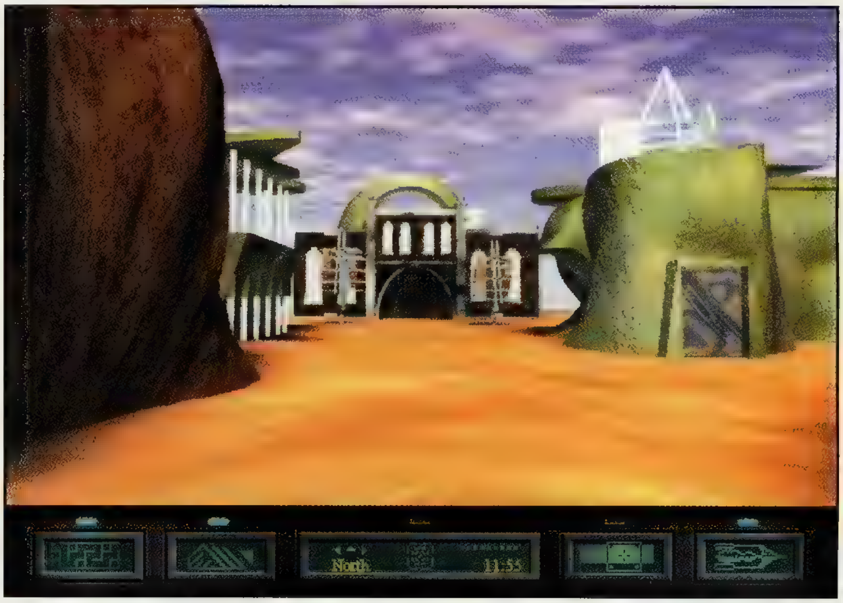
Category: Graphic Adventure

Developer: Byron Preiss Multimedia

Publisher: Simon & Schuster Interactive,
175 Fifth Ave, Suite 2122
NY, NY 10010 (970) 339-7137

Required	We Recommend
Double-speed CD-ROM drive; 486DX/25; 8MB RAM; Supported sound card; Mouse; Windows 3.1	486/66; 16MB RAM

***The Martian Chronicles* may be based on a classic of science fiction, but this is one adventure that's strictly a grade-school primer.**



The exploration of Mars is surprisingly bland and uneventful, courtesy of a few static bitmaps and lackluster gameplay.

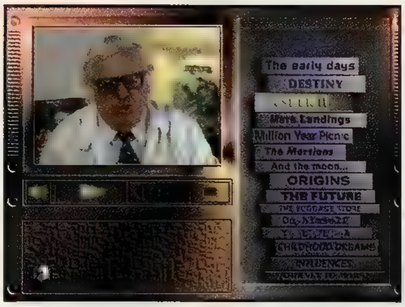
As computer gaming has evolved from a cottage industry into a much more mainstream and accessible form of entertainment, a lot of veteran gamers seem to think the current generation of games is suffering from a lack of content when compared to games of the past. This is only partly true. There is no shortage of content: great writers and great stories are everywhere. The problem is that many game developers simply don't know what to do with quality material when they get it. Take, for example, Byron Preiss Multimedia.

Preiss got access to some of the richest source material in the history of science fiction: Ray Bradbury's *The Martian Chronicles*. How could anyone turn such stories as "Usher II," "The Million-Year Picnic," and "The Earth Men" into anything but a game full of wonder, invention, and adventure?

Preiss and associates seem to have worked overtime to prove that, in fact, someone *can* turn diamonds back into coal. Their *Ray Bradbury's The Martian Chronicles Adventure Game* is one of the top stinkers of the year. If it were just another adventure game, it would only have warranted a contemptuous glance. But anyone who blows such a golden opportunity and squanders such brilliant source material deserves an extra dose of scorn.

The Martian Chronicles, for those who haven't read it, is a series of short stories and connecting passages that form a 27-year history of humanity's encounters with Mars. Like all good science fiction, it's more about people than gadgets and bug-eyed creatures: Sam and his hot-dog stand, Stendahl and his love of Poe, Ylla's visions.

But in the game, these touching and disturbing tales of humanity and misery take a back seat to a simplistic goal: Your task is to get into the Martian Archives, where there is information that will help avert a nuclear war on Earth. Unfortunately, the way you go about doing so is immediately familiar and tiresome. It seems the extent of work that was done in creating the game was to take a bunch of bitmaps and a few lean QuickTime movies, then string them together with Macromedia Director: a software tool designed for building business presentations.



Unfortunately, the interviews with Ray Bradbury are the only appealing element to be found in *The Martian Chronicles*.

You wander step-by-step through the static screens of this Martian environment, with a few tools (an automap, a scanner, and a data recorder) to help you unravel the mystery. This mostly involves reading small type on signs for clues and picking up things for use in later puzzles. It's trying to be *Myst* on Mars, but it's a far cry from that game. The graphics are boring and sterile, the puzzles crummy, and the engine clumsy and unstable.

It's a damned shame. When you think of what *could* have been done with *The Martian Chronicles*, and what a lost opportunity this is, it becomes all the more aggravating. To make a lousy game out of nothing is easy. But to make a lousy game out of something truly brilliant takes a special kind of talent.

—*T. Liam McDonald*

PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT

49%

HIGHS: The Ray Bradbury interviews are interesting and provide some appeal.

LOWS: Stunningly boring, cliched, lifeless, and bland.

BOTTOM LINE: A tragic waste of brilliant source material.

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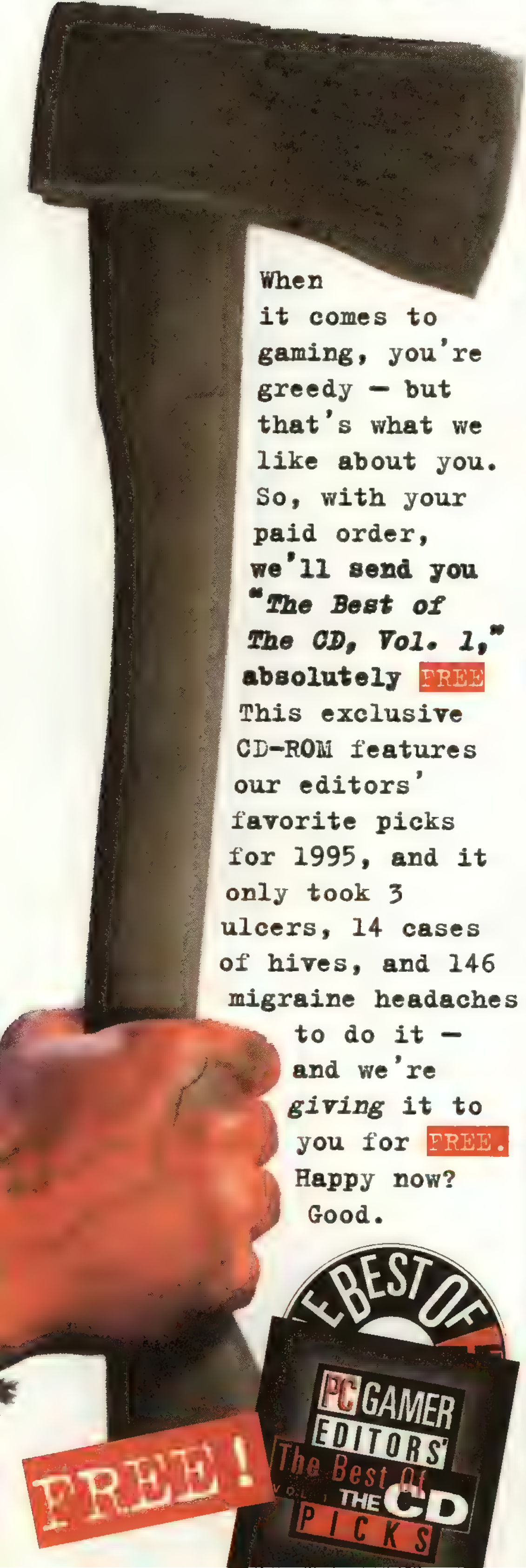

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Product Information Number 132

Su-27 Flanker

Win95

This could have been the next big name in flight sims, but *Su-27* comes dangerously close to spiraling out of control.

Category: Flight Sim

Developer: Flying Legends

Publisher: SSI, 675 Almanor Ave, Suite 201,
Sunnyvale, CA 94086-2901
(800) 601-7529

Required	We Recommend
Windows 95; Double-speed CD-ROM drive; 486/66; 8MB RAM; 1MB SVGA card	Pentium; 16MB RAM; Supported sound card; Joystick

To understand the dilemma presented by *Su-27*, you have to travel back in time a little, back to 1991 when Spectrum HoloByte released their highly anticipated, ultra-realistic F-16 fighter simulator, *Falcon 3.0*. It had been in development for quite some time with lots of hype, and people were dying to get their hands on it. Spectrum HoloByte released it ... and promptly got savaged for publishing a flawed, bug-ridden game that many considered unflyable.

Flash forward a few months: Spectrum has performed the necessary fixes to make *Falcon 3.0* air-worthy, and continues to tweak the game with regular patches. Everyone is united in their opinion that *Falcon* is the finest combat simulator ever.

Now we jump to late 1995, and the long-awaited SSI/Flying Legends sim of the formidable Russian Su-27 fighter is released just in time for the Christmas buying season. Like *Falcon 3.0*, it's a deep, challenging sim with a great design and a lot going for it. But also like *Falcon 3.0*, it has some serious problems that could have been avoided if the game had not been released prematurely.

The Su-27 is, along with the MiG-29, one of Russia's premier air superiority fighters. Called "Flanker" by NATO countries, the Su-27 was created by the Sukhoi design bureau in the 1970s as an answer to the U.S. Air Force's F-15 Eagle. Designed as an interceptor and air superiority fighter, it has also been adapted for ground-attack roles, much like the Eagle.

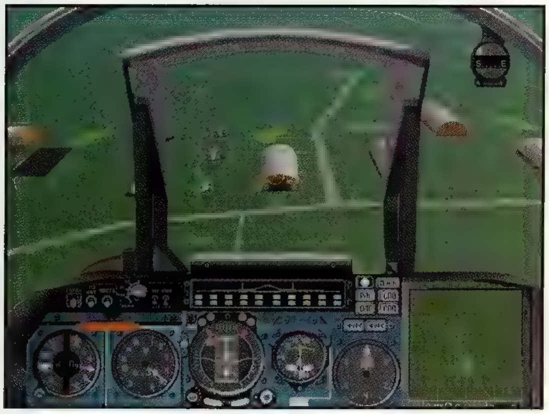
Some of the Su-27's unique characteristics include a complex fly-by-wire system, a high degree of maneuverability, "jam-proof" radar, helmet-mounted target designator, and standoff, look-down/shoot-down capabilities. Its sophisticated and powerful engines keep up thrust in even the most extreme conditions and buffeting. This allows for astounding maneuvers like the show-stopping Pugachev's Cobra, in which the Su-27 achieves a rapid deceleration by pulling into a 100-degree angle of attack, then leveling off in a matter of seconds.

All of which is possible in *Su-27 Flanker*, thanks in no small part to a group of Russian aerospace professionals and programmers with intimate knowledge of the Su-27. They have created what is unquestionably — even with its flaws — one of the most accurate combat flight simulators ever.

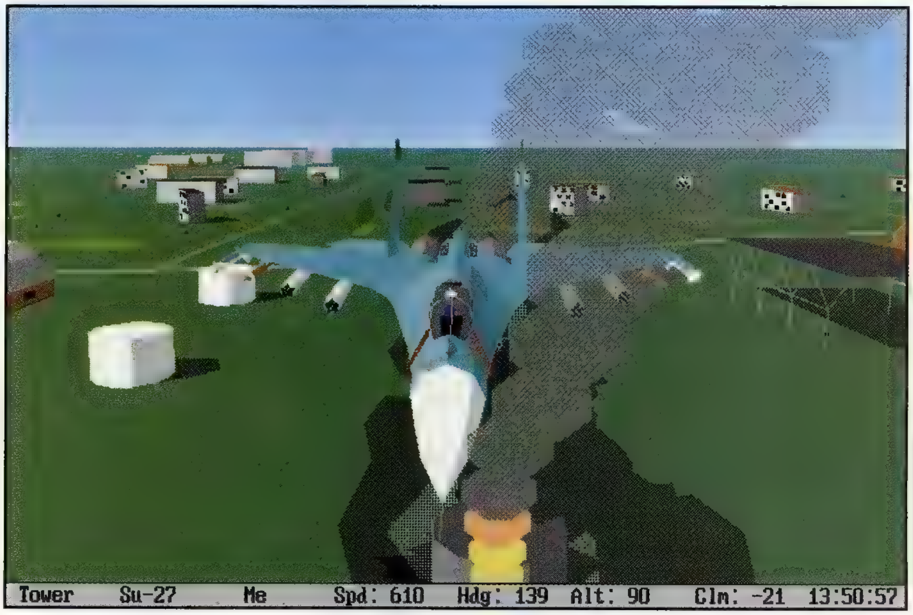
Su-27 Flanker has rigidly authentic modeling of such flight dynamics as stalls and buffeting. The game's designers have created tough computer opponents who perform realistically in each mission, and they've even thrown in little details like animations of all control surfaces on the airframe (flaps, ailerons, airbrakes, etc).

There's also a diverse mix of complex missions (including dusk and nighttime missions), and an elaborate mission editor. In accuracy and complexity, it surpasses *Falcon* in many areas, but both in and out of the cockpit it fails to live up to its potential, thanks to a number of oversights that should've been given top priority.

The Windows 95-only design (there is a DOS version in the works) means compatibility and configuration problems are, for the most part, alleviated, though I found joystick support dodgy. Upon startup, it's clear that the "no chrome" approach has been taken to extremes: not only is there no startup animation, but the first thing you see is a rather confusing file menu, which prompts you to choose a scenario to play.



Diving in low to unleash a rocket salvo in the Crimea, the Su-27 shows its versatility as a ground-attack vehicle.



Tower Su-27 Me Spd: 610 Hdg: 139 Alt: 90 Clm: -21 13:50:57

***Su-27*s Super VGA graphics aren't quite state-of-the-art, but they're crisp, clean and very attractive.**

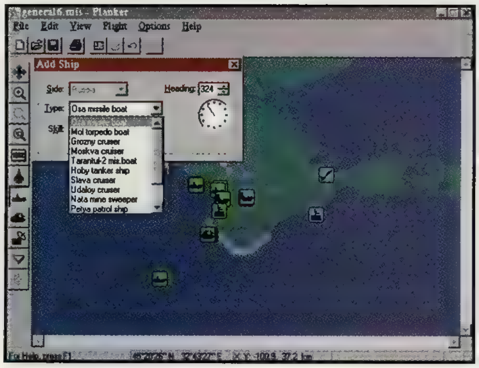
The file designations tend to be confusing, and the mission descriptions often run off the screen, requiring you to scroll back and forth in order to read them. Much of this confusion could have been partly alleviated by using the long file-name capabilities of Windows 95. With all the experience SSI has in creating computer games, the user-unfriendly nature of this interface is simply baffling.

As frustrating as it is (and it's damn frustrating), once you figure out how to get into *Su-27*, you'll be able to access the core screen and get the first hint of this game's power. The interface is designed around a map of the mission area: in this case, Crimea, a hot spot in the Black Sea just below the Ukraine. It's the only theater of battle, but it provides a diverse enough environment to keep missions interesting. The game map displays the current mission, with icons representing every unit in the field.

At this level, you have absolute control over the composition of missions. You can change force dispositions or mission parameters, add or subtract aircraft, or create entirely new missions by placing friendly and enemy air, sea, and land forces. It's very easy to use, with simple icons and countless options for tweaking missions by changing such things as damage states, loadout, altitude, and so on. This is the best mission editor seen in any sim, bar none.

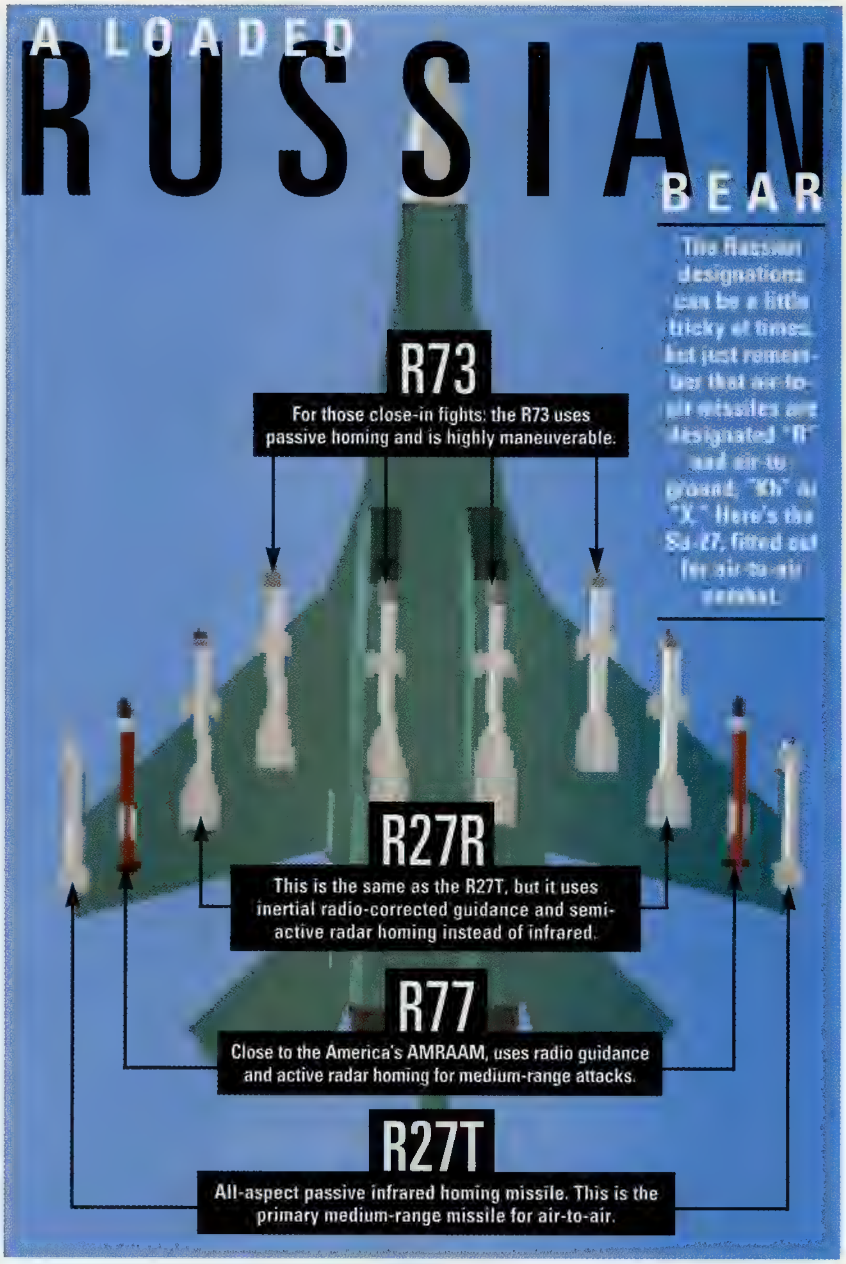
In flight, *Su-27* is no less impressive. The aircraft handles incredibly, and while it doesn't look like *U.S. Navy Fighters* or *Flight Unlimited*, the graphics are mostly terrific (though the sun looks awful and there are no clouds), and the frame-rate is silky smooth. The strength of this sim, however, is in how it flies and in the detailed missions. Handling and combat is ultra-realistic and totally engaging, with smart enemies in both the air and on the ground. Myriad views, including head-swivelling, padlock views, and extensive exterior views, are offered, as well as a great mission recorder. In short, it's a multi-featured, elaborate, fun sim.

But even here the lack of extras begins to take its toll, extinguishing much of the potential of the game. While some sound effects are good, most are decidedly not, and there are no digitized voices at all. Wingman controls are very limited, though wingmen tend to behave correctly. There is no campaign mode, and missions, though thematically linked, don't form any kind of unified whole.



The main mission screen lets you edit countless parameters for each mission, or create your own.

A LOADED RUSSIAN BEAR



The Russian designations can be a little tricky at times, but just remember that air-to-air missiles are designated "R" and air-to-ground, "Kh" or "X." Here's the Su-27, fitted out for air-to-air combat.

R73

For those close-in fights: the R73 uses passive homing and is highly maneuverable.

R27R

This is the same as the R27T, but it uses inertial radio-corrected guidance and semi-active radar homing instead of infrared.

R77

Close to the America's AMRAAM, uses radio guidance and active radar homing for medium-range attacks.

R27T

All-aspect passive infrared homing missile. This is the primary medium-range missile for air-to-air.

Though head-to-head play was not promised, this game cries out for it, and people have come to expect it in high-end sims. Its absence in a game developed for Win 95 (whose DirectPlay API should make head-to-head support much easier to put into games), is disappointing. Worst of all, *Su-27*'s electronic countermeasures don't seem to work, making some missions almost impossible.

Despite the excellent way the game flies, it's terribly hard to recommend to all but the most dedicated flight fanatic. *Su-27 Flanker* has an incomplete feel to it, as though it was thrown out the door to meet the holiday rush. I'm hoping SSI won't abandon *Su-27 Flanker*, and that they'll take a lesson from the *Falcon 3.0* story.

As you read this review, many of *Su-27*'s problems may have already been resolved. I expect them to be, and I'll certainly revisit *Su-27* in my *Extended Play* column to track its progress. The crack team at Flying Legends worked hard and put a lot of talent into this project, and it shows in many ways.

For now, though, the final word is this: *Su-27* will be required flying for serious jet jocks, but it'll need some patches before it's a contender for the classic crown.

—T. Liam McDonald

PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT

78%

HIGHS: Dynamic flight model, excellent missions and mission builder, challenging opponents, deep play.

LOWS: Bugs, confusing interface, zero chrome.

BOTTOM LINE: If SSI does the proper patches for it, *Su-27* might just be the next classic air combat sim.

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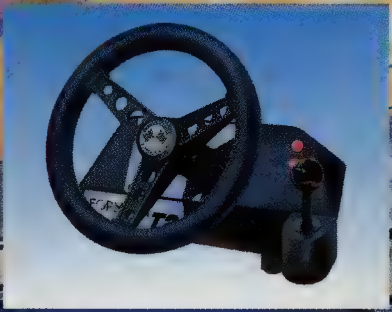

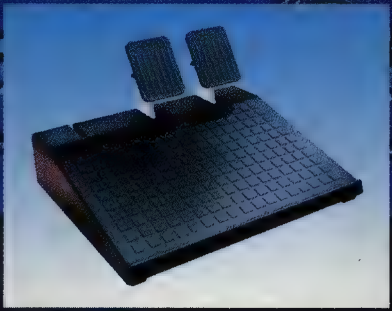

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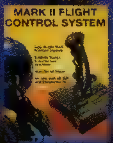

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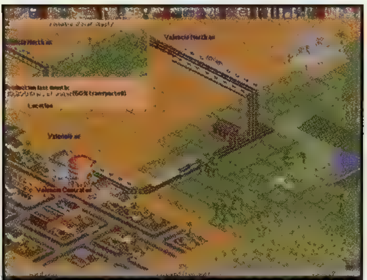
Product Information Number 169

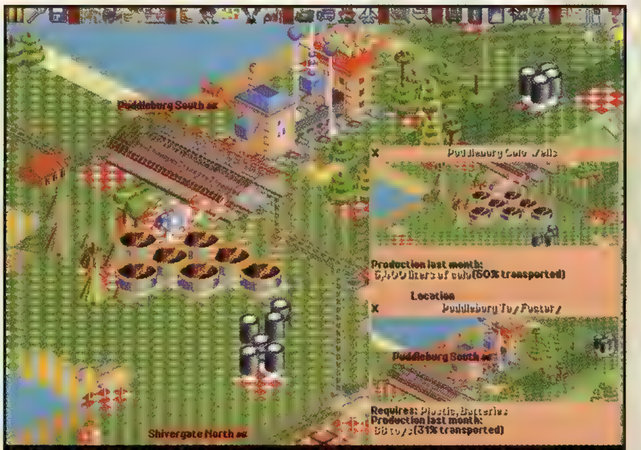
Where No Train Has Gone Before

T. Liam McDonald

I have a simple way to tell a classic game: it's game that a reviewer plays long after he's turned in his review. Lately, for me, this has included *Steel Panthers*, *Crusader: No Remorse*, and — still going strong — *Transport Tycoon*. I had been so busy lately that I hadn't spent much time on *TT*, but then something marvelous crossed my desk that reminded me why I love this game so much.



Hauling water can make for decent profits in *TT Deluxe*'s desert terrain set.



In *Transport Tycoon Deluxe*'s new Toyland terrain set, you bring batteries to the toy factory and cola to the soda factory.

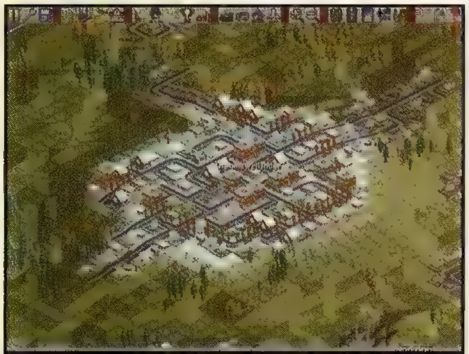
Transport Tycoon Deluxe

Now, reviewing "Deluxe" products and CD-ROM ports is a risky business. Usually you're dealing with old games that have been repackaged with a few enhancements to make them seem new, so retailers will give them valuable self space. The question always boils down to: if I have the game already, do I get enough in the "Deluxe" version to make it worthwhile? The answer is usually a qualified "maybe." With *Transport Tycoon Deluxe*, it's a (still qualified) "yes."

The qualification comes from the fact that, if you already have this game and love it, you'll really want what's new in the deluxe edition. (This is doubly true if you missed the somewhat lackluster expansion pack for *TT*.) If you have this game and are so-so about it, thought, you won't want to bother. And if you don't have the game at all ... what's your problem?

One of the finest strategy sims on the market just got a lot better. *Transport Tycoon Deluxe* isn't just a repackaging of a game and its add-on disc; it's a thorough overhaul of MicroProse's classic.

TT Deluxe tweaks and extends gameplay in a number of areas. First and foremost, the excellent scenario editor of the expansion disk has been included. Fortunately, though, clearer heads have prevailed, and the inexplicable "Martian" tile set has been dumped. Three new terrain types have been created, however, and the entire *look* of the game got a nice polish. Now you can play in the sub-arctic, filled with sometimes impassable snowy mountains, and the desert, with its long expanses of prairie. Also included is a totally goofy, brightly colored "Toyland" terrain set, filled with entirely new industries like cola wells; bubble generators; toy, candy, and soda factories; toy stores; cotton candy forests; and so on. Bring cola and bubble to the soda factory, and you have soda. Haul batteries and plastic to the toy factory, and it turns out little robots, which you can bring to the toy store. A pretty nifty set, but one that is undermined by an unfortunate checkerboard terrain pattern that makes scrolling hard on the eyes.



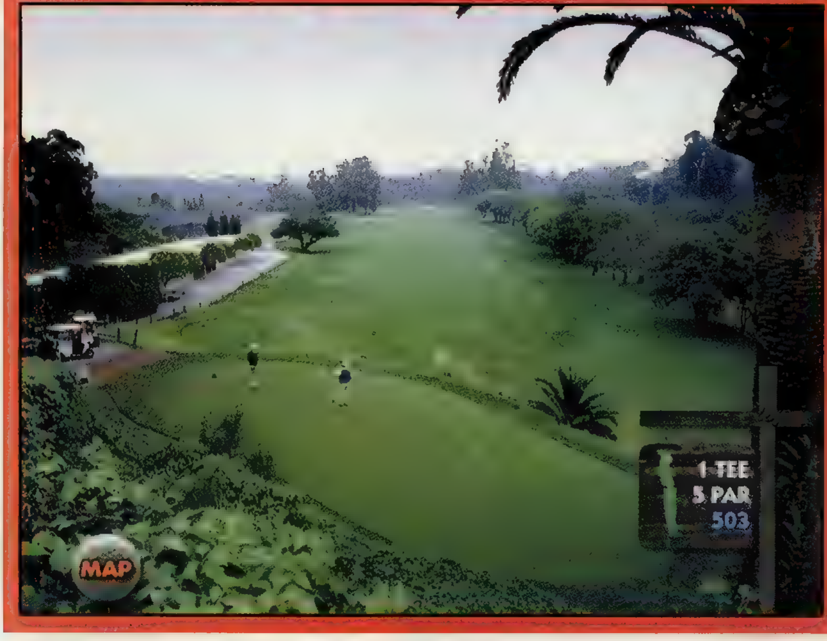
Reaching snow-capped mountains puts a lot of stress on your train engines.

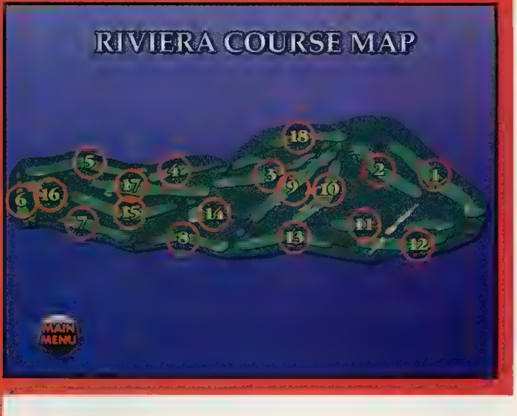
Other industries have been added to *TT Deluxe* as well: water needs to be hauled to water towers and diamonds to banks, while rubber and fruit need to go to the factory and food processing plant. Some new transport types have been included, such as the Maglev train (a 400 MPH wonder), water cars for hauling water, and other unique designs for each terrain type. Ships and planes can now be refitted to carry different kinds of cargo, which can radically change gameplay. Each vehicle can be given up to 40 orders instead of 15, and the total number of stations has been increased to 250. Heliports built in cities and airports have much better takeoff/landing capabilities.

There is also now an option to buy shares in other

RIVIERA COUNTRY CLUB

The new *Links 386 Pro Riviera* course features a multimedia history and an interactive guide to each hole.





companies, letting you eventually take them over if you get enough shares. A boon to players who found themselves low on industries to service is the ability to fund your own industry (at about $1,000,000 per shot). A more complex signaling system has been created to allow for one-way signal lights, which allow trains to pass in one direction. Gameplay is also about 50% faster, but an option to adjust the speed of the game would still be welcome. The AI has also been polished, and while it is undoubtedly better, it still does some stupid things at times, and it cheats like nobody's business.

New terrain, transport types, industry, terrain editor, and even a few dozen pre-generated "scenarios;" not a bad package at all. If you're a big fan of the original *Transport Tycoon*, you'll definitely want to check this out, and MicroProse is offering it to registered users of the original for about $30.

Riviera Country Club

The bimonthly flow of *Links 386 Pro* and *Microsoft Golf* add-on discs has fallen off to a trickle, but that doesn't mean the quality has. In fact, if anything, it's improved. The *Riviera Country Club* disc from Access is a handsome production in all respects.

First you have the course itself, built by George Thomas in the 1920s and featuring some of the hardest holes in the country. Though it's a fairly long course at around 7,000 yards, its challenges lie more in a plethora of hazards that choke fairways and crowd the greens. From a terraced first hole to a green with a sand trap smack in the middle of it, there are more unique and truly challenging holes than in any course yet done by Access.

All of the holes are, of course, gorgeously rendered, as we've grown to expect from Access. But they've added a little treat to this CD-ROM: a multimedia tour and history of Riviera. With a rich history of celebrities and great golfers, this makes for a nice touch. Better yet are the detailed examinations of each hole, featuring multiple still shots from various perspectives and a video fly-over of each, with narrated tips from the experts. A class-A production all around.

PCG

Bug Patches & Cheats

Patches and cheat programs are available on the *PC Gamer* CD-ROM in the \PATCHES subdirectory; from online sources such as the Internet, CompuServe, and America Online, and through game publishers. One good source is The Games Domain web page on the Internet at *http://www.gamesdomain.co.uk/*. But be warned: it can be slow at times, since it gets a lot of traffic from gamers.

Apache:

Addresses the problems with the preferences screen and "invincible" mode (no modem fixes in this patch).

Cactus League Professional Basketball:

For *1967-68*, *1964-65*, and *1954-55* team disks there are separate patches to correct stats and other data.

Command & Conquer Cheats:

There are two new cheats for this popular game:

- *COMMAND & CONQUER Editor v1.4* allows editing of weapon payloads for infantry, vehicles and structures, infantry and vehicle costs, structure costs, structure power requirements and power production, structure and unit hit points, stealth capabilities of vehicles, vehicle firepower, unit and structure ownership, unit and structure technical levels.
- *COMMAND & CONQUER Mission Selector* lets you select any mission for either side.

Flight Unlimited v.2.01:

Fixes non-recognition of joysticks and joystick calibration, calibrating the hat for the Thrustmaster joystick, Matrox video card and Virtual i/O i-glasses! problems, and "Divide Overflow" error.

Heroes of Might and Magic v.1.2:

Should fix some problems with modem connects and some random crashes.

Mechwarrior 2 VFX1 Patch:

Fixes VFX1 headset support.

Mechwarrior 2 "Battlemaster Cheat" Fix:

This will fix the spelling error that prevents you from using the Battlemaster with the "Enzo" cheat. Not an Activision patch.

Ripley's Believe it or Not! The Riddle of Master Lu Patch:

Removes the 100-room limitation that causes the "Fatal Error" and "player_enters_scene()" errors near the end of the game.

Tigers On the Prowl v.1.26:

Fixes known problems and improves some AI functions.

Ultimate Football '95:

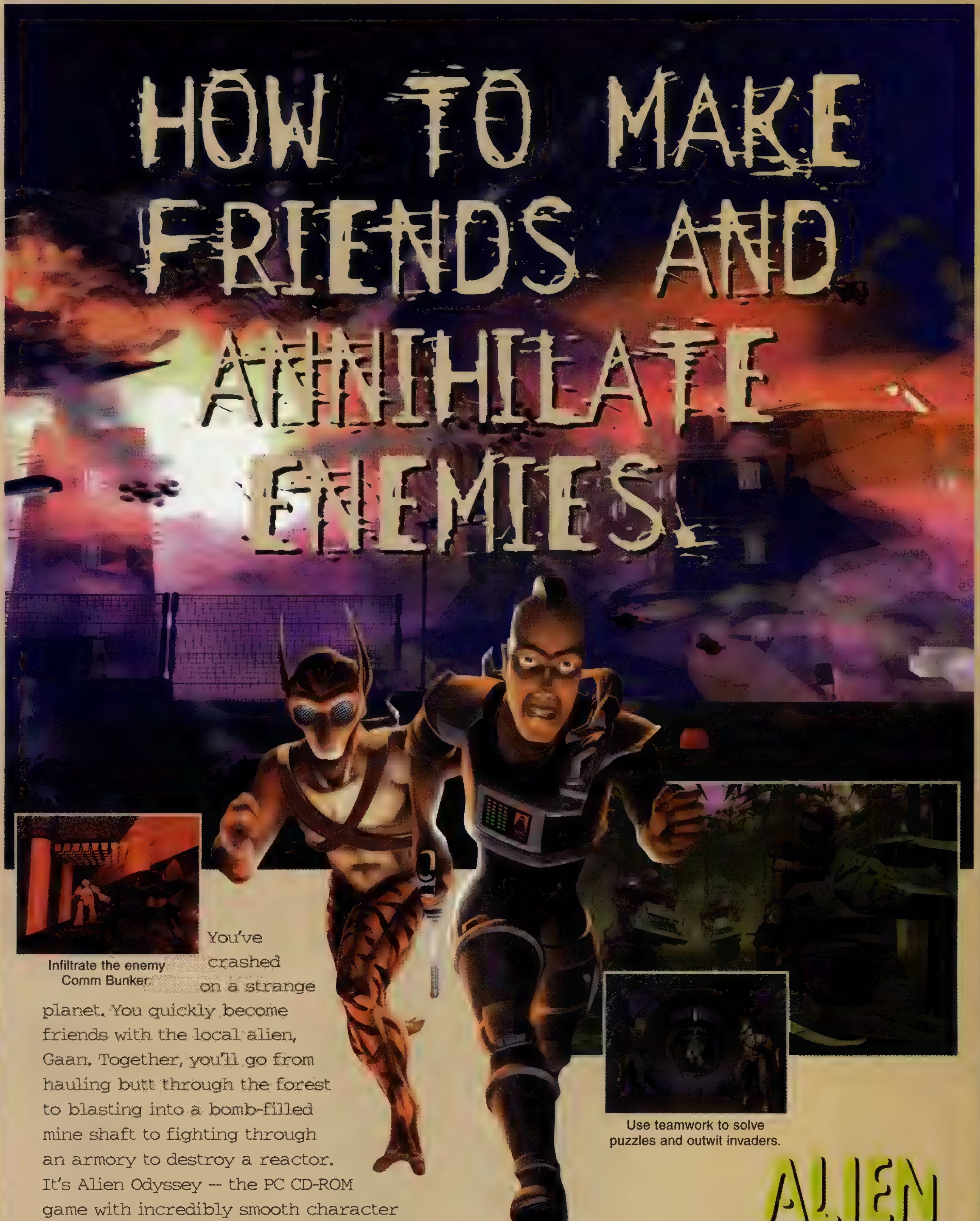
Corrects the "CD NOT FOUND" problem.

Virtual Pool v.1.6.6:

Allows *VP* to use any IRQ set to 10 or above.

Warlords II Deluxe v.2.2.4:

Latest general maintenance patch.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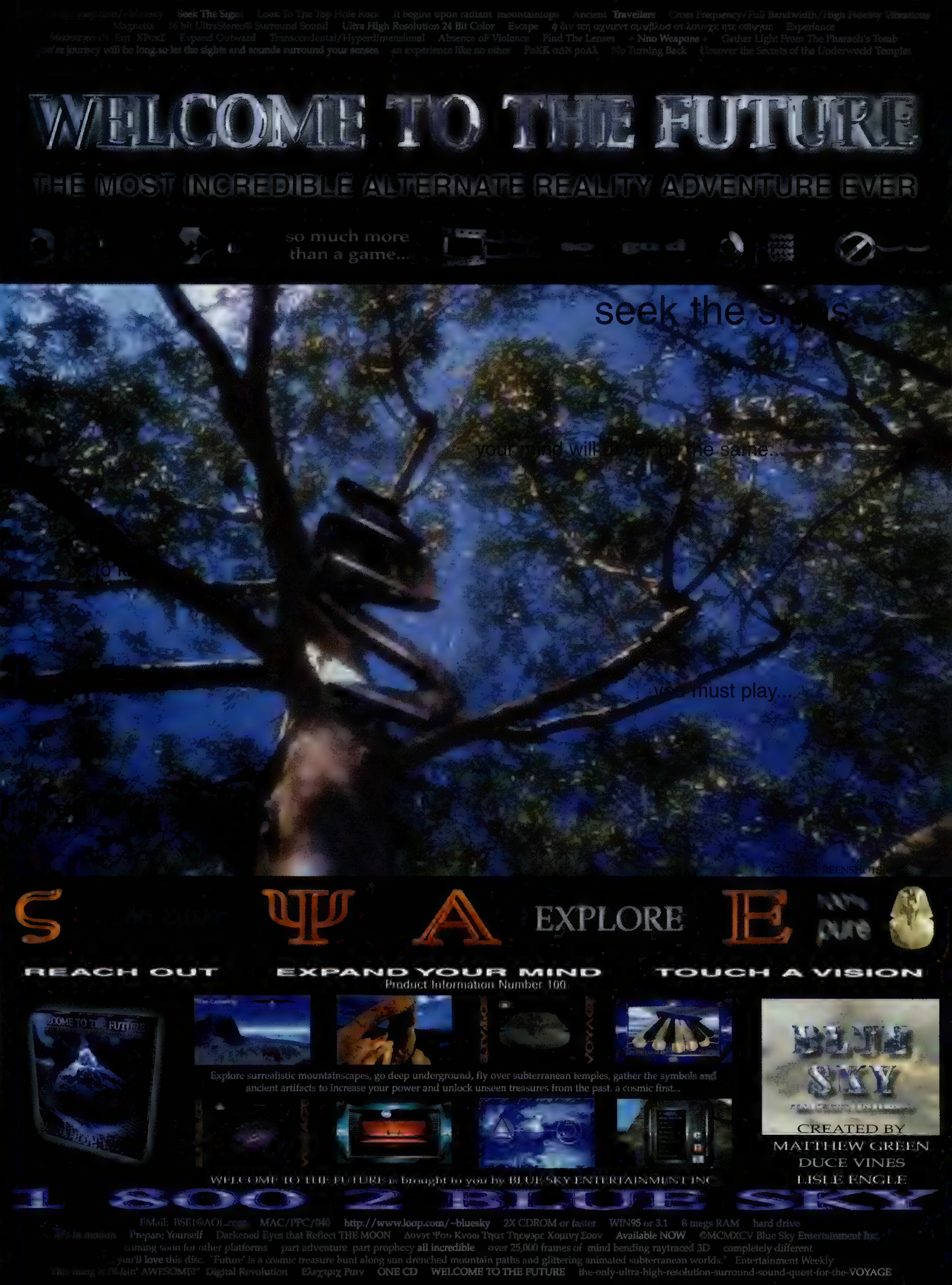

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Beating the Expiration Date

Heidi E. H. Aycock

Taken to its extreme, every software package has limited potential; that's the nature of a computer program. One of the challenges of software design is to defy that limit, to create the illusion of infinite possibilities. Construction programs like *The Incredible Machine* or *Widget Workshop* seem as open-ended as a box of crayons and the Great Wall of China. Multilayered programs like *The Lost Mind of Doctor Brain* seem to go on forever. Research tools, word processors, graphics packages, and electronic storybooks all have a long life expectancy. These programs represent one end of a spectrum.

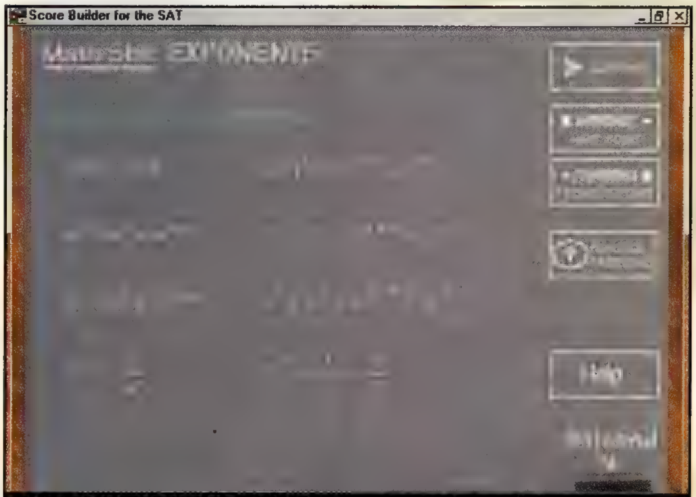
Recently, I explored some that represent the other end, packages with a short shelf-life. Programs with a definite end or limited usefulness have always baffled me. Why would you buy a program that you will never use again once you've finished it?

Score Builder for the SAT and PSAT

For an example of apparently limited programs, look at software that prepares students for standardized tests. Davidson offers *Your Personal Trainer for the ACT*; the Princeton Review produced a practice test a year or two ago; and The Learning Company recently released *Score Builder for the SAT and PSAT*. I spent a week or so with The Learning Company's program, wondering what a family could do with the package once the Scholastic Aptitude Test was over. It was like the package had an expiration date, so I came up with some different ideas on how to add life to the program.

After all, it was a fine piece of software, for the most part. Based on Dr. Gary Gruber's system for improving test scores, the program assesses students' strengths and weaknesses, then prescribes a study program culled from a menu of electronic practice sessions. Depending on how much time a student can commit, a few days could help anyone improve his or her scores. With a few weeks, National Merit Scholars may emerge.

I am never impressed with online personalities, and Dr. Gruber and his assistants are no exception, but otherwise the program was presented beautifully. The dry facts were related clearly, succinctly, and in a visually attractive style. I did wish there had been more exercises, but they were quite helpful, and the explanations were even better.



In *Score Builder for the SAT and PSAT*, math section reviews are delivered by electronic chalkboard, and verbal section reviews are scratched on digital notebook paper.

Score Builder for the SAT and PSAT has one important advantage over classroom reviews: this program offers a relatively inexpensive, home-based plan. Kids can work at their own pace; they can succeed or struggle in private without the pressure of other kids around them. They can work when they want to — which may be never, but that's another problem entirely — so they don't have to give up a Saturday morning when they might rather sleep in. Parents may need to create some sort of incentive program to encourage kids to use this program since no one's taking attendance and no one's waiting for them to finish the tests, but the flexibility may be well worth the need for ingenuity.

> Every piece of software has a fairly limited lifespan, but a little ingenuity on your part can help you get extra mileage out of your educational programs.

So how can families squeeze a few more hours of value out of this program after the SAT is done? Try using it to remind grownups of the trials and tribulations of high school course work. Next time a parent wants to yell at a child about grades, he or she should try Dr. Gruber's assessment test. High school math is particularly opaque and Byzantine after several years away from the classroom, and balancing a checkbook will not keep parents in practice.

On the other hand, parents can use the program to help them help their kids with homework. Launch *Score Builder*, and you can cover factoring equations in about 30 minutes. Not only does the program offer a quick, clear review, but it also offers the language for explaining complex math topics. This bonus helps parents who can solve math problems, but can't generalize the principles or explain how they did it.

In addition, what's sauce for the goose is sauce for the gosling. If a child is having a tough time with math or vocabulary, *Score Builder* may offer just the right amount of extra practice the child needs. It may also explain a concept a little differently, in a way that turns on the light for a baffled geometry student. Sometimes a short explanation clears away a lot of confusing debris and makes a concept easier to grasp.

Don't be fooled by its title — *Score Builder for the SAT and PSAT* offers value long after the SAT has been completed. It makes the high school curriculum accessible to kids and parents, and it reminds families of what's expected by society, what we should all know or at least be able to learn in short order.

GeoSafari

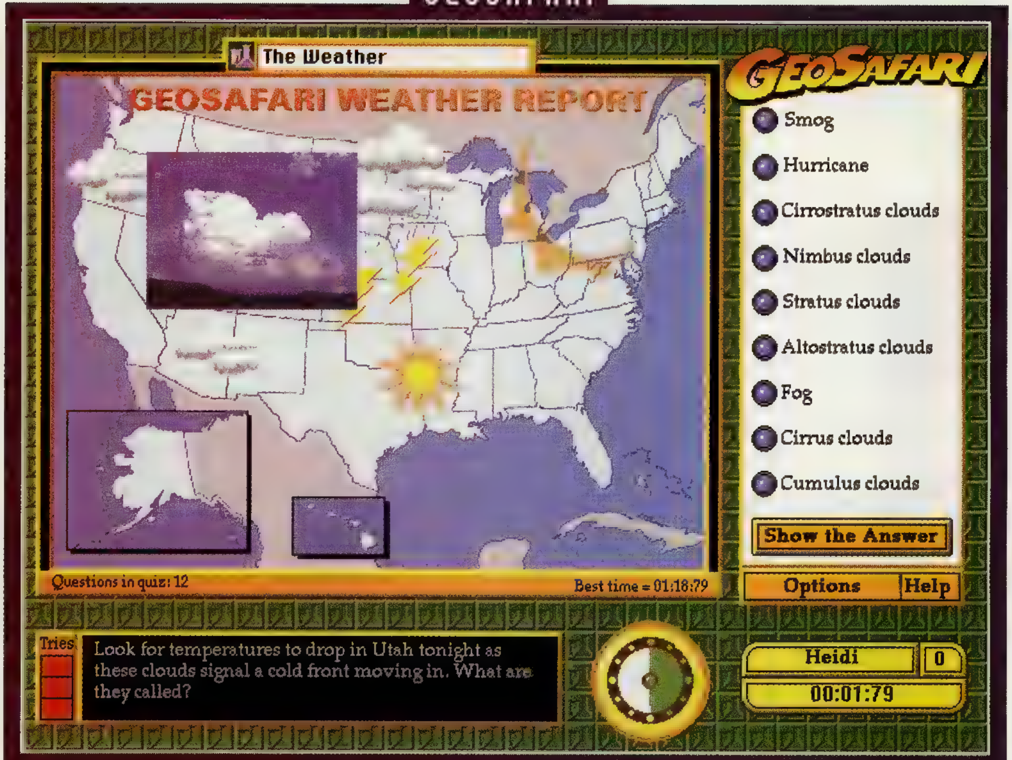
For another example of software with limited use, consider *GeoSafari*, a popular stand-alone electronic game that has been adapted on CD-ROM for Windows. This program doesn't suffer from an expiration date, but rather an expired license.

I'm probably going out on a limb here, all by myself, with a bunch of screaming, chainsaw-wielding monkeys clamoring about the tree trunk, but the educational design of *GeoSafari* lags far, far behind the times. The program is a trivia game with some nice record-keeping tools, a mellow narrator, and some high-tech illustrations.

Its simple-minded design, however, seems to suggest that knowing who wrote *Pride and Prejudice* is just as good as reading it. The only people who should be impressed with *GeoSafari* are the people who had to design the original game within the confines of the original electronics.

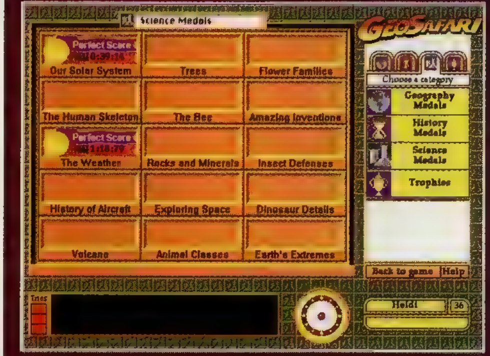
The program can be salvaged, however, because the raw materials are excellent. The scope of this trivia game explicitly covers science, history, and geography, but within these categories are quizzes about writers, fashion, art, and many other topics. *GeoSafari* is packed with content, and the content is well-rounded. The quiz on great writers, for example, includes questions about African-American writer Toni Morrison, as well as Chilean writer Gabriela Mistral. Artists also include notable women, like Mary Cassatt and Georgia O'Keefe.

GEOSAFARI


The Weather
GEOSAFARI WEATHER REPORT
GEOSAFARI
Smog
Hurricane
Cirrostratus clouds
Nimbus clouds
Stratus clouds
Altostratus clouds
Fog
Cirrus clouds
Cumulus clouds
Show the Answer
Options
Help
Questions in quiz: 12
Best time = 01:18:79
Tries
Heidi
0
00:01:79

Look for temperatures to drop in Utah tonight as these clouds signal a cold front moving in. What are they called?

GeoSafari uses sharp graphics, smooth narration, and a simple interface to guide players through its trivia game. The program is packed with information, and the content is well-rounded.


Science Medals
GEOSAFARI
Perfect Score
Our Solar System
Trees
Flower Families
The Human Skeleton
The Bee
Amazing Inventions
Perfect Score
The Weather
Rocks and Minerals
Insect Defenses
History of Aircraft
Exploring Space
Dinosaur Details
Volcano
Animal Classes
Earth's Extremes
Choose a category
Geography Medals
History Medals
Science Medals
Trophies
Back to game
Help
Tries
Heidi
36

To motivate players to learn its vast storehouse of useful information, *GeoSafari* awards medals for each category completed with a perfect score.

The History section quizzes players on Native American cultures, teaching the names of nations and tribes, and describing — in very short blurbs — the culture of early American groups.

To salvage the program, you need to approach the game as a team. A grownup and a child can pool their knowledge and teach each other how they figure things out, discuss how to think. For example, in a history quiz on great artists, when a the clue says to find a Flemish artist who painted a zebra in the lower left corner of every masterpiece, the team may not know the answer. But they may each have a clue that would lead to a good guess. Rule out the Italian sounding names, for example, eliminating a third of the choices. One team member may recall that Fleugel the Younger painted tigers in the center of all of his paintings — how that team member learned it may not be important, but that it was available information is most significant because there, on the list of artists, is Fleugel the Elder. Maybe the Elder started a trend and passed it on to the Younger, the team speculates. And they'd be correct — if the Fleugels weren't figments of my imagination. And, indeed, children and adults would have learned a lot about how to think.

But thinking doesn't seem to be the point of *GeoSafari*. The point is to memorize the immense body of facts in the program through repeated play. The program designers have built in various — and hackneyed — motivational techniques: A timer challenges players to answer quickly and beat their times on subsequent attempts; medals are awarded for perfect scores; and several players can compete against each other.

Being a trivia fan, these motivational strategies work for me. Back in seventh grade, though, no little computer graphic of a medal would have convinced me to try to remember which president won all the votes in the Electoral College. On the other hand, learning how to beat trivia experts without memorizing every bit of data would have intrigued me.

With all of the student-driven, exploratory software out there, *GeoSafari* doesn't rank highly as an educational package. Its extensive content earns points, but its presentation short-circuits the scoreboard. If your family loves trivia, or if you believe that drill and practice is a good way to learn about art, literature, science, and the rest of the world, *GeoSafari* will surely satisfy you. But add some human insight to the game, add some critical thinking, ask questions. The *GeoSafari* experience needs more richness and depth if it's going to truly teach kids anything important.

PCG

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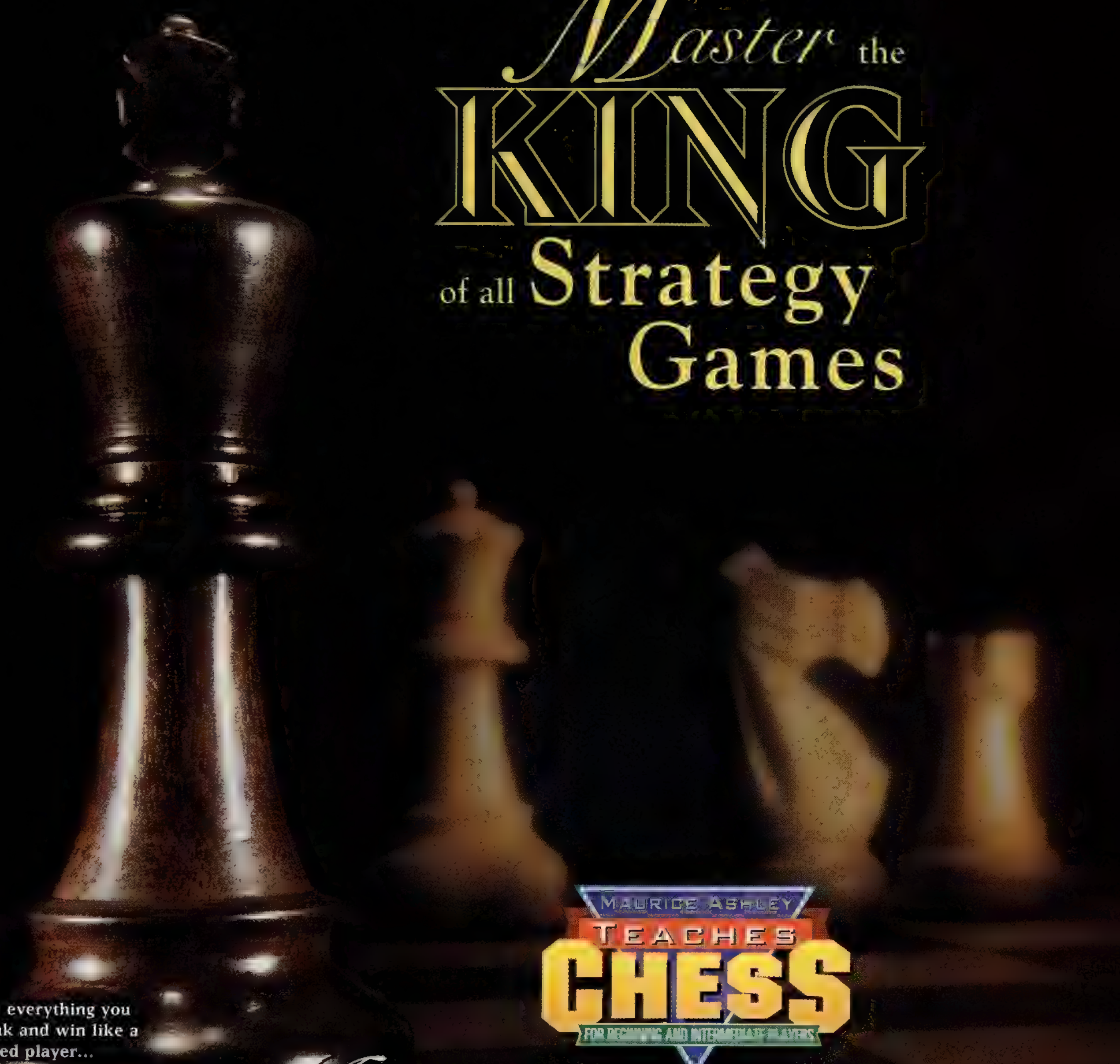

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Product Information Number 99

Shareware With a Vengeance

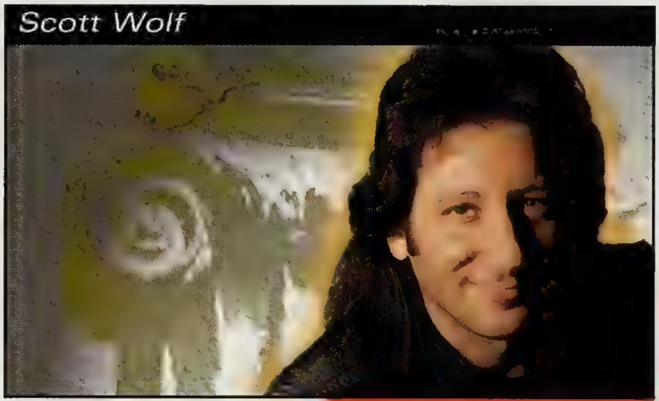
Well, the holidays have been good to The Wolf. I just added another gig-and-a-half hard drive to my system, and I feel like a strung-out junkie on his first dreamy hit of China White in months. Hmm — that's probably not a very good analogy to use here. Forget I said that. Let's just say that I feel like a guy who's had several dozen boxes of software sitting on his floor because he didn't have enough hard-drive space to install anything new, and has suddenly been throwing stuff on like there's no tomorrow (and if I had my way, there wouldn't be). You name it — *EF 2000, Crusader: No Remorse, Trophy Bass, Screamer, The Hive, Wetlands, Pinball Illusions, Top Gun, Total Distortion* — they're all new neighbors on my fresh E and F partitions. Meanwhile, the shareware arena has been showcasing some outstanding new contenders; here are the ones that get the Pawprint of Approval for February, 1996.

Black Knight: Marine Strike Fighter

With so many new high-end flight sims on the market, how do you decide which one to pop for? Well, you could spend an hour downloading a demo that lets you fly for a few minutes (*Su-27*'s demo gives you ten minutes, *Fighter Duel*'s gives you a whopping three), or you could spend that same time snagging a demo that actually gives you five full training missions and five complete combat sorties.

Created with the full cooperation of Miramar-based Marine squadron VMFA-314, who not only provided history and realism input, but beta-tested the sim as well, FormGen's *Black Knight* could well be the PC successor to EA's Amiga classic, *F/A-18 Interceptor.*

Black Knight features a smooth flight model, user-friendly flight instruction, Gouraud-shaded ground detail and 3D stereo sound digitized from real F/A-18s. Look for it on AOL, CompuServe and at the Happy Puppy site on the World Wide Web at *http://www.happypuppy.com* in two parts, BKSE12A.ZIP and BKSE12B.ZIP. The registered version gives you 60 combat missions, a functional flight recorder, a talking flight instructor, and a whole lot more.



Scott Wolf

Skunny

Remember Copysoft's Skunny Squirrel — star of a series of games named after him, including the wacky arcade racer *Skunny Kart*? Well, the little guy's back in Magic Touch's new 32-Bit DOS-based game, simply titled *Skunny*.

This time out, he's uncovered an ancient treasure map showing the locations of incredible treasures scattered throughout the world. The shareware demo takes place on a pirate ship on the high seas of the Caribbean. The game features lightning-fast, six-level parallax scrolling, 16-bit stereo sound effects and MIDI background music, dozens of objects to interact with, an integrated editor to create levels, and a "world manager" that lets you archive worlds for distribution to other gamers and install worlds created by others.

Look for SKUNNY.ZIP in CompuServe's Action Games Forum (GO ACTION), on AOL (Keyword PCGAMES), Atomic Entertainment's FTP site *ftp.atomic-ent.com* or web page *www.atomic-ent.com/webpage.*

Nature abhors a vacuum, and there's nothing like a bunch of new hard-drive space to send you looking for new games to install. Fortunately, there's some terrific shareware waiting online.

Return of the Mutant Space Bats

Pop Software finally strikes back with the official second installment of The Mutant Space Bat Saga. *Bats 2: Return of the Mutant Space Bats of Doom* is a space shooter that features the same intense and maddening action as its predecessor — only, this time, the Bats have learned a few new tricks.

Fortunately, so have you. At your disposal are Zap and Rotospike charges, attained by collecting crystals. Zap will always go for the nearest enemy — some are destroyed, some are repelled, some are converted, and some are frozen; while Rotospikes go out and do damage to all onscreen enemies and return when the job is done.

Look for RETURN.ZIP on AOL, at Pop Software's Web site *http://www.fungame.com* or call (800) 531-GAME.

Prairie Dog Hunt PRO

After a short hiatus from the shareware world, Ian Firth has decided that everyone deserves another shot ... at prairie dogs! *Prairie Dog Hunt PRO* contains a 360-degree viewable area, frame-animated prairie dogs, a zoomable gun sight, and improved sound effects.

Due to the nature of the animation in the game, a powerful PC is recommended for full enjoyment. And if your video card does not support image stretching, you'll be notified, and the Scope Zoom feature will be disabled. *PDH PRO* contains two styles of play: Timed and Open Season. Timed games consist of shooting as many prairie dogs as possible during a set amount of time. Open Season is self-explanatory — get some coffee, load up 30 rounds in the clip, and go nuts! Options allow you to select the amount of ammunition in your clips, the density of prairie dogs, and their speed. And if your system can handle it, you can set your sight's zoom factor to 1.5x, 2.0x or 4.0x. *Prairie Dog Hunt PRO* can be registered online with CompuServe. Just GO SWREG and search for keywords "Diversions," and "*Prairie Dog Hunt PRO.*" The registration fee ($25) will be added to your monthly CompuServe bill.

And that's it for now. I can hear all of that free drive space calling to me. **PCG**

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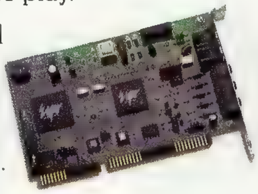

HeadOn also includes standard 14.4Kbps data and fax modem features, and it readily fits into any standard PC ISA bus slot. Easy-to-use software is provided for plug-n-play installation, telephone dialing/answering, and remote gaming with simultaneous voice.

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Product Information Number 109

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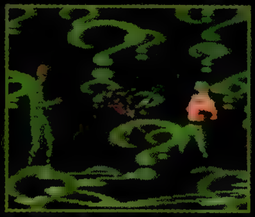

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Product Information Number 84

To Err is Human

Trent C. Ward

It's never easy to admit when you've been wrong, so I've put it off for a while. But better late than never, right? A few months ago, I sat down and typed out a nice long column about the death of roleplaying, citing watered-down RPG online forums as one of the first signs of the apocalypse.

Well, like I said, I was wrong. A few days ago, I got a chance to look at Interplay's latest work in their Advanced Dungeons & Dragons and GURPS lines. Far from being harbingers of the doom I predicted, this latest batch of games has the potential to not only please existing RPG fans, but to bring an entirely new group into the fold.

One of the first AD&D titles is called *Blood and Magic*, and it follows in the footsteps of strategy titles like *Warcraft* and *Master of Magic*. Unlike those other games, though, *Blood and Magic* also offers up the familiar characters and spells from the AD&D Forgotten Realms universe. The game features both a single-mission mode with scenarios both serious and humorous, and a campaign mode in which the player attempts to conquer the entire land. As with many of Interplay's new AD&D games, this title contains enough serious RPG elements to engross fanatics while offering up an experience that is sufficiently different from standard RPGs to attract new players to the genre.

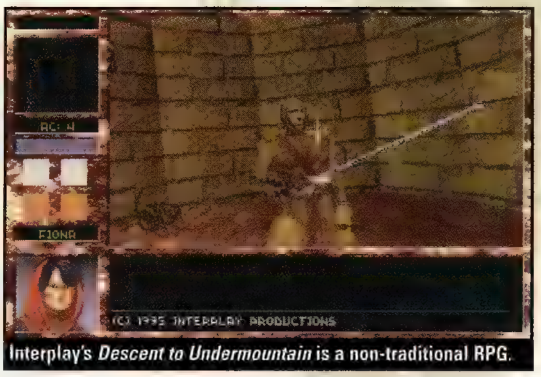
Another break from the traditional RPG format that's sure to bring in new players is *Descent to Undermountain*, which combines the first-person 3D graphics of the popular sci-fi action game *Descent* with roleplaying elements, creating a game that promises to be a lot of fun. The smooth graphic look of the game continues to shape up, and the addition of even more secret passageways, magic, and genuine AD&D monsters is making this game look like a real winner.

Although it's still a long way from completion, Interplay's translation of Steve Jackson's GURPS system continues, and it's starting to look like a die-hard roleplayer's dream. In addition to graphics that have to be seen to be believed, the company is designing a system that will, perhaps for the first time, allow characters with very different skills to tackle standard game puzzles in ways that make the most sense for them. For instance, strong characters with plenty of combat skills will be able to muscle themselves out of a bad spot, while smarter characters will be able to talk their way out of the same situation, and characters with greater dexterity may be able to use their skills to simply slip away.

In addition to the laudable new system, the GURPS programmers are also creating some truly remarkable graphic and artificial intelligence routines that will let the Interplay storytellers create non-player characters that are more than just a disembodied voice attached to a few frames of animation. The total package is really starting to shape up, but the programmers are still playing coy when it comes to giving out details.

OK, so roleplaying isn't dead. In fact, if the new games Interplay has in the works are any indication, the future of roleplaying is pretty healthy.

Another tight-lipped group is the team working on the Interplay's first title set in the AD&D Planescape world, currently slated for release much later this year. Although there's still not much more than a set of written plans at this point, the development team has been lucky enough to add David "Zeb" Cook to their ranks, one of the original designers of the Planescape pen-and-paper product. As I write this, the team is looking for the most effective ways to bring this immense world to life on the computer screen. Even at this early stage, though, there's little doubt that this game will be one of the most innovative RPG titles ever, and if it lives up to the caliber of work being done on the other AD&D products, it could be one of the most entertaining as well.



Interplay's *Descent to Undermountain* is a non-traditional RPG.

If you're into TSR's new Dragon Dice game, you'll be glad to know that progress on the computer translation of this one continues as well. The artists on this title have done a phenomenal job of bringing the Dungeons & Dragons world to life with high-quality images of various creatures from the TSR universe. The finished product is right around the corner, and as much as any of the other titles, this game seems poised to bring a completely new group of gamers into the RPG world.

Some roleplaying purists are bound to complain about the break with tradition represented by some of the latest RPGs. But as long as games like *Blood and Magic*, *Dragon Dice*, and *Descent to Undermountain* prove profitable, publishers will still be able to justify development costs on more traditional games like the GURPS and Planescape titles. It's always nice to be part of an exclusive group, but if RPGs are to survive, it will have to be by expanding to encompass the interests of many gamers, and then introducing them slowly to the addictive pleasures inherent in controlling an intelligent alter-ego.

PCG

Raising Hell in a Very Small Place

In last month's issue of *PCG*, I expressed serious disappointment with the wargame construction system in *Empire II*. Yes, it allowed you to create battles from any historical era, and yes, it allowed the sort of micro-quantification that some hardcore fanatics revel in, but the damned thing was so complicated — and so poorly explained in the manual — that I found it far more trouble than it was worth.

For all its anal-retentive obsession with minutiae, the whole package had a curiously "mushy" feel to it, and the actual battles — when and if you could figure out how to design one that was actually playable — struck me as lethargic, ponderous affairs, sadly lacking in drama. One seldom experienced the sudden rush of spotting a tactical opportunity and going for it with desperate urgency.

William R. Trotter

Now, in response to a tsunami of consumer requests, QQP has finally published a construction-set/scenario editor for *The Perfect General II*, and it delivers all the fun, excitement, and flexibility you could ask for.

The system is clean, elegant, and controlled by a sweetheart of an interface. If you're a veteran *TPG2* player, you'll have little trouble figuring out how to set up battles of any size, or even link battles into campaigns. When you've completed your initial design, just click on "verify," and the computer will tell you exactly what, if anything, you need to do to render the scenario playable.

Once you've got a verified scenario, you can save it under any category of battle found in the original game.

In order to test drive the program, I decided to set up a simulation of Dien Bien Phu (the epic 1954 siege in which the Communist Viet Minh — brilliantly led by an ex-school teacher named Nguyen Giap — broke the back of French power in Indochina). I've always wanted to see a PC simulation of this battle — now, thanks to QQP, I could design my own.

Guided by maps from Bernard Fall's classic account of the siege, *Hell in a Very Small Place*, I recreated the terrain right down to the rice paddies and jungle-covered hills where Giap hid his artillery, and I fortified the French positions with lots of bunkers and mines. After a mere forty minutes, I had created a beautiful replica of the actual battlefield.

Next step: Setting up victory locations and assigning point values. Each French fortress was assigned its own value, and I used three "city" hexes to simulate French general de Castries' headquarters (worth 2500 points). Next step: designating "reinforcement regions" — small ones inside the perimeter, since most French replacements were air-dropped; huge ones in the jungle, to replicate the intricate web of Viet Minh supply trails.

Then came the composition of forces: artillery and infantry only for the Reds, but *big* numbers of buy-points. To symbolize the French advantage in air power, I used "off-shore artillery" points.

Once I had fine-tuned things and gotten the green-light from the "verification" scan, I swapped discs and played the French defender against the computer on its highest setting.

What do you do when you can't find a simulation of an historical battle you'd love to fight? Grab the *Perfect General II* scenario editor and build it yourself.

To my delight, this home-grown scenario played out with startling historical realism. Hordes of red-flagged Viet Minh infantry doggedly pressed forward on all sides, while my light tanks, machine guns, and fortified bazookas slew them by the (symbolic, at least) thousands. Meanwhile, Giap's artillery, dug in on jungle-covered slopes all around the garrison, slowly pounded my fortifications to pieces and silenced my guns, one by one.

There were two airstrips inside the fortress, and I fudged a little — for the sake of playability — by letting the French base up to six planes on them. At first, these proved invaluable in knocking out Giap's artillery, but then — again, to my delight — the computer enemy did *exactly* what Giap did in 1954: it surrounded the artillery with numerous anti-aircraft guns and started shooting down my planes faster than I could afford to replace them.

My first Dien Bien Phu scenario played out remarkably like the real battle: an abattoir of slaughter marked by fanatical determination on the Communist side and incredible defensive heroism on the part of the paras and Foreign Legion garrison. So I fashioned another, alternate-history scenario based on the (very real, for a while) possibility of massive U.S. air power intervention. A very different battle indeed, resulting in a draw. Fascinating!

After this impressive test-drive, I started letting my imagination run wild, designing Stalingrad-type urban battles, islands-only battles, "riverworld" battles — and tinkering with the various replacement options, sometimes allowing the computer to randomize things, in order to guarantee some surprises, both pleasant and dire.

One small quibble: the title "Scenario Editor" leads you to assume that you can, in fact, edit the original scenarios that come with *TPG2*. Unfortunately, you can't. But by recreating the maps (not so hard, once you get the hang of it), you *can* experiment with ways to beat those vexatious battles you never quite won the first time around.

And I would be remiss — after all the carping I've done in the past — if I did not mention that the manual for this new program shows signs of having been professionally written *and* proofread.

In short, QQP has given *Perfect General* fans a scenario-builder that is everything they could want. Now we can all stop bitching about the lack of one in the original game — and proceed to happily run amok. **PCG**

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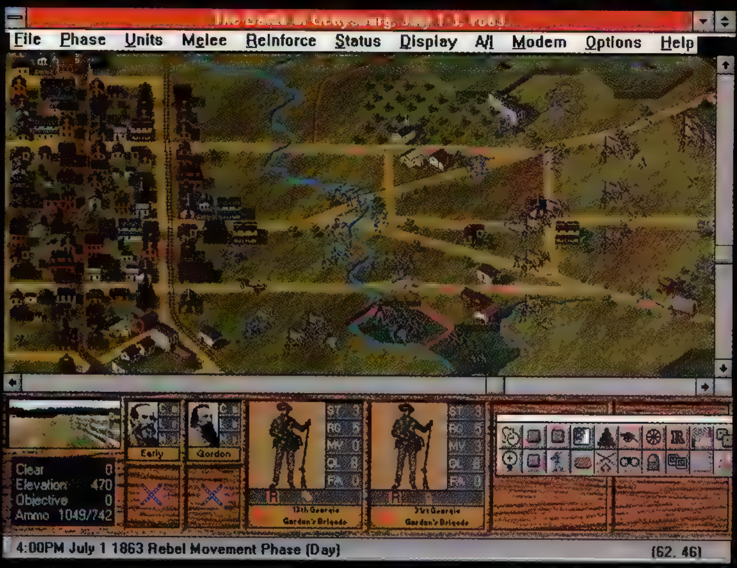
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Gordon's Brigade

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Product Information Number 168

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Product Information Number 134

Dispatches from Las Vegas

Comdex, the way-too-big computer show in Las Vegas, is still a serious, business-oriented show. But computer entertainment is no longer an oddity there, and I saw more than a few things that should come as good news to sim fans.

Dust off your virtual golf clubs and take those funny-looking clothes to the cleaner, because the next generation of Links is well underway and set for release next spring. Access isn't talking much, but here are a few tidbits:

First of all, there will be modem and network options for multiple players. It's about time; golf seems to be a natural for modem play, but nobody's done it yet. I can't wait to taunt my opponent with those now-immortal words: "Looks like you hit the tree, Jim."

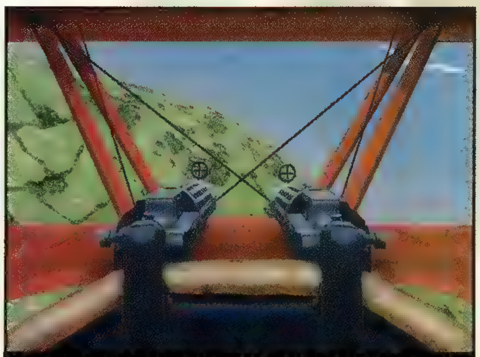
Weather conditions will include more than just the wind. How about mist or fog to change the scenery? Also look for a vastly different chipping interface. And there will be several features that computer hackers have been begging for all along, including computer opponents, tournament play, and a skins game.

Getting to the next hole promises to be entertaining, too. You won't just pop up at the next tee; you'll move there — by cart, I guess — so you can enjoy the scenery along the way. Older courses will work in the new game, just like the original *Links* courses did in *Links 386 Pro*. Hawaii's Kapalua looks like the first new course for *Links Pentium*, or whatever Access ends up calling it.

And if you haven't made the switch to Windows 95, this might just be the reason to take the plunge: the new Links will be a native Windows 95 program.

Dynamix, Sierra's sim division, has been pretty quiet this year, but you can look for that to change in a big way in 1996. *Red Baron II* promises to be a sensational follow-up to the original, an antique of a favorite of many computer pilots.

Here's a surprise for you: Dynamix is working on *Front Page Sports: Baseball '96*. As I've said before, *Front Page* is the only baseball sim that manages to re-create the physics of baseball on the field. Sure, the game was flawed statistically, but nothing else comes close to delivering the look and feel of baseball. I thought Dynamix had abandoned the game, but the company hopes to release it next spring. Bring it on!



Dynamix has big plans for 1996, including *Red Baron II*, the follow-up to the antique original.

Lee Buchanan

Retailers shopping for the latest processors and storage devices found plenty of fun on the show floor, too. *NASCAR Racing* seemed to be the favorite game to show off high-powered systems, and business suits were lining up to race one another on a network set up in the Dell space. Several fights broke out in the Diamond Multimedia space, where well-groomed business types were duking it out on the PC version of Sega's *Virtua Fighter*.

Diamond and Creative Labs are also at war, as they look to get your business in the 3D accelerator market. These new graphics boards, and others like them, will be the next big thing in gaming graphics, but we're not there yet. Hold on to your money until this new bit of technology settles out some.

Here's something else to look forward to: full-duplex, voice-capable modems. Pretty soon we'll be wearing headsets with microphones, talking live and in real-time to our modem opponents. Imagine closing in on your buddy in a race at Talladega — while you're taunting him on the phone. Or sneaking up on your *Doom* rival and saying hello before you blow him away. Modem gaming is about to get a lot more entertaining.

There's only one problem with Las Vegas: the city preys on the weak and the less fortunate. With any luck, you'll see plenty of reviews by me in the next few issues; I'll need the work to help pay off my losses at the blackjack tables. That's OK. I'll win it all back next year.

> Do enough exploring at Comdex, the business-oriented computer show in Las Vegas, and you'll find signs of the gaming industry's growing importance.

Correction

Have you ever stepped in between two combatants to stop a fight, and come away with a bloody nose? That's how I feel after I wrote about the split between Domark and Interactive Creations over *Confirmed Kill*, the multi-player, online air-combat sim. Apparently, I screwed up, so let's set the record straight: Interactive Creations developed *Confirmed Kill*, and contracted with Domark to use that company's *Flight Sim Toolkit* graphics engine. Interactive Creations decided to go with a different graphics engine and backed out of the deal with Domark, according to ICC's Robert Salinas. And that's the end of that story. Perhaps the most important result of the *Confirmed Kill* split is that we now have *two* new online air-combat sims to look forward to — Domark still plans to put out *Confirmed Kill*, and Salinas and company are nearly finished with their own project as I write this.

PCG

Ready, Willing and Stable

It might sound strange to say this, but PC technology has been surprisingly stable for the past few years. Of course, you might wish that PC technology had moved more slowly if you have a two-year-old PC that struggles under the weight of the latest games, but while individual components have gotten cheaper, faster and better, the basic design of our systems hasn't changed that much.

The standard game PC of the early 1990s looks something like this: a 32-bit Intel-compatible processor chip, a local-bus SVGA video card, and a Sound Blaster sound card or one of its 16-bit successors. Some of the details might be different — more or less RAM and hard-drive space, a Pentium CPU instead of a 486, PCI slots instead of VL-Bus — and CD-ROM drives have opened the door to bigger games with rich soundtracks, digitized speech and full-motion video. But the basic architecture has stayed the same, and the systems all run the same games.

Developers spend a lot of time fighting against this platform's limitations, no doubt about it. It's been a headache dealing with a 16-bit operating system — namely, MS-DOS — that runs on a 32-bit computer. The system is also built around a "dumb peripheral" model — the interfaces don't do much processing, so one CPU chip has to do almost all the work. And the primitive analog joystick interface has, with a few exceptions, pretty well ruled out multiplayer games on a single PC (network/modem games are a different story).

But because the system has been around so long, programmers have had time to learn most of its quirks and nuances. Once you've mastered the instruction set of the Intel 386 CPU, a few DOS tricks and some fairly simple programming models for each peripheral device, you can spend your time writing games and building worlds, instead of having to learn a new feature set and a new API for each new piece of hardware. Most likely, having such a stable platform has helped the growth of PC games more than it has hurt. Still, some big changes may be on the way.

Multimedia processor chips could change PC gaming more than any other technology. Designs like Chromatic Research's Mpact, Nvidia's NV1 and Philips' TriMedia combine circuitry for handling audio synthesis, video decoding and network communications, all on a single piece of silicon. Intel and Cyrix are also reported to be working on multimedia processors, and a lot of other semiconductor companies probably have something similar in the works.

Tim Victor

The first practical application of a multimedia processor chip is in a PC add-in card. Diamond Multimedia's Edge 3D card, based on the Nvidia NV1 chip, functions as both a wavetable audio card and as an accelerated video card with advanced 3D rendering, and it comes with enhanced versions of *Virtua Fighter*, *Descent*, and *NASCAR Racing*, all customized to use the card's acceleration hardware. Sega has also announced plans to create PC versions of many Saturn games, which will require an Nvidia-based accelerator card like the Edge 3D.

To play a head-to-head game like *Virtua Fighter* on a single machine, you need a better controller interface than the joystick port that's part of the standard game PC. The Edge 3D card includes two ports for hooking up Sega Saturn controllers, and games written specially for the Edge 3D will be able to read those devices directly. Other games can read these controllers if they use the Windows 95 DirectInput API, part of Microsoft's game subsystem for Win 95.

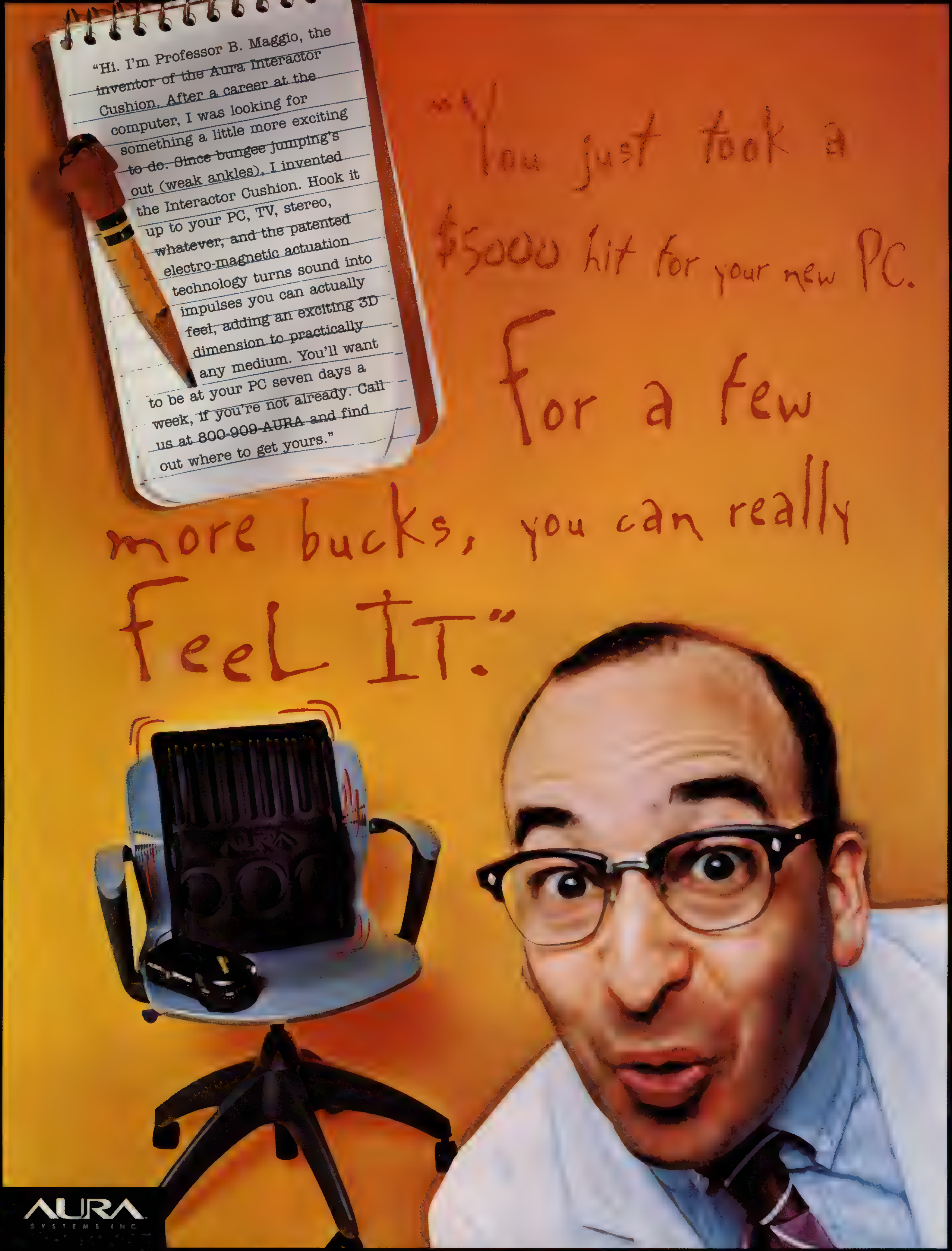
DirectInput is a general interface layer between games and their controller devices, and it could lead to other innovations besides allowing for more controllers and more players. For one thing, the standard analog joystick port has always been a processing cycle hog — just reading one joystick can burn as much as 12% of the CPU's processing power, so there's an immediate gain by switching to a new type of digital interface, which DirectInput allows.

The first joystick designed specifically for DirectInput is Microsoft's own Sidewinder 3D Pro. Besides using a digital interface, it also features extra buttons, a throttle, and an additional axis of motion. Advanced Gravis's GrIP MultiPort system is another advanced interface with Plug-n-Play support under Win 95, supporting up to four of its own controllers. However, as a way of hedging its bets until Win 95 reaches the saturation point, Advanced Gravis is also helping game developers write code to directly access the GrIP interface ports in DOS games.

It's simple enough: when new technology is there, someone in the PC business will figure out how to use it. With all the great new 32-bit video game systems around now, there's a lot of pressure on the PC games market to incorporate the same kinds of whiz-bang sound and graphics hardware. But if there are three or four incompatible new accelerator systems battling it out, PC game software will become fragmented — it won't just be a question of whether or not your PC is fast enough to run a particular game anymore, but of whether or not you bought the right type of accelerator card.

Whether you're a fan of Microsoft or not, Windows 95 seems to be our best hope for keeping the PC gaming world together. If Win 95 becomes popular enough, and if its game APIs are rich and general enough to put a wrapper around every accelerator, multimedia processor and interface that shows up on the streets, then the standard game PC of the late 1990s will be based on software rather than hardware. It'll be a different system from the one this business grew up with, but it'll be a single, unified system nonetheless. **PCG**

> New hardware technology is poised to change the face of gaming for the better — but it may be software that helps the PC remain a unified, stable system.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Product Information Number 175

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After surviving the holidays and ushering in the New Year, you'd think those every-day gaming problems would start to get a little easier. But here you are, pulling your hair out over the latest frustrating mission in that new flight sim, or finding yourself stuck in a tough-as-nails action game. Never fear; the Strategy Central crew is here to get you rolling.

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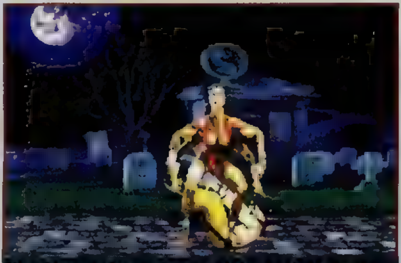
Mortal Kombat 3

Blow your mind and kill your friends! It's the *Mortal Kombat 3* cheat sheet!

Like previous Mortal Kombat games, the third installment in the classic MK lineup features more of the spine-breaking carnage we've all come to know and love. But unless you're a die-hard arcade junkie, it's a pretty safe bet you're having a hard time figuring out all of those deadly special moves that let you unleash unspeakable fury on your opponents or reduce them to helpless infants. So to help you get the most out of this kill-or-be-killed experience, here are the codes to issue those fatalities, babalities, and more.



The Sheeva Stomp is one of the easiest moves to perform in *MK3*; just quickly move the joystick down, then up.

Legend

F = Forward (toward opponent)
B = Back (away from opponent)
D = Down
U = Up
LP = Low Punch
HP = High Punch
RP = Release Punch
BK = Block
HK = High Kick
LK = Low Kick
R = Run

Jax

Fatality — D, F, D, LP
Animality — Hold LP, F, F, D, F, Release LP
Babality — D, D, D, LK
Friendship — LK, R, R, LK

Kabal

Fatality — BL, BL, BL, HK
Animality — Hold HP, F, F, D, F, Release HP
Babality — R, R, LK
Friendship — R, LK, R, R, Up

Kano

Fatality — Hold BL, U, U, B, LK
Animality — Hold HP, BL, BL, BL, release, HP (at close range)
Babality — F, F, D, D, LK
Friendship — LK, R, R, HK

Kung Lao

Fatality — D, D, F, F, LK
Animality — R, R, R, R, BK
Babality — D, F, F, HP
Friendship — R, LP, R, LK

WINS: 13
79
JAX WINS
FRIENDSHIP

Don't fall asleep just yet, Sonya! Watch me do crossovers with my eyes closed!

Liu Kang

Fatality — R, BK, BK, LK
Animality — D, D, D, U
Babality — D, D, D, HK
Friendship — D+R, D+R, D+R

Nightwolf

Fatality — R, R, R, BL
Animality — F, F, D, D
Babality — F, B, F, B, LP
Friendship — D+R, D+R, D+R

Sektor

Fatality — D+R, D+R, D+R (at close range)
Animality — F, F, D, U
Babality — B, D, D, D, HK
Friendship — D+R, D+R, D+R

Shang Tsung

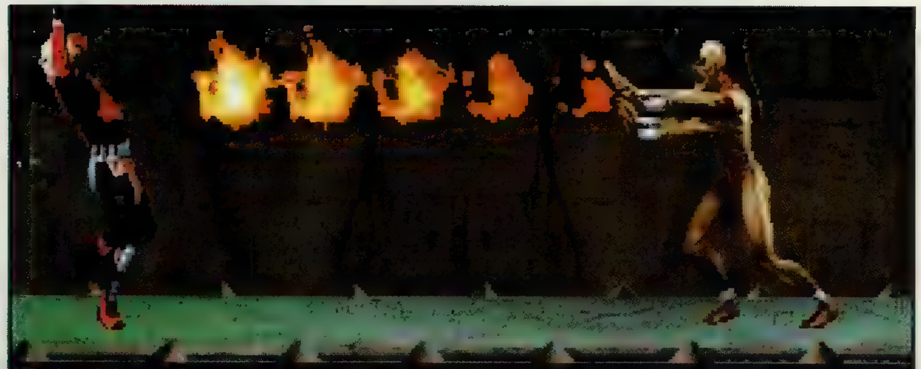
Fatality — Hold LP, D, F, F,

WINS: 00
82
PRESS PUNCH
SHEEVA
SHEEVA WINS
FRIENDSHIP

After serving up Cyrax a heaping helping of whup-ass, Sheeva shows her hidden talents by balancing these plates in an act of friendship.

WINS: 02
82
WINS: 00
SONYA
SONYA WINS
BABALITY

We're not sure if it's due to her looks or because she's got that maternal instinct, but Sonya can reduce any opponent to a helpless baby.



Whether she's up close and personal, or on the other side of the screen, Sheeva is full of deadly surprises, like this damaging fireball attack delivered from long range.

D, Release LP, Hold LP, D, F, D, FP, Release LP
Animality — Hold HP, R, R, R, Release HP
Babality — R, R, R, LK
Friendship — LK, LK, R, R

Sheeva

Fatality — F, F, D, D, F, LP
Animality — R, BK, BK, BK, BK, HP
Babality — D, D, D, B, HK
Friendship — F, F, D, F, HK

Sindel

Fatality — R, BK, BK, R+BK
Animality — F, F, U, HP, F, F, HP
Babality — R, R, R, U
Friendship — R, R, R, R, R, U

Sonya

Fatality — B, F, D, D, R, D, D, D, F, LK
Animality — Hold LP, B, F, D, F, Release LP
Babality — D, D, F, LK
Friendship — B, F, B, D, R

Stryker

Fatality — D, F, D, F, BK, D, F, D, F, BK
Animality — R, R, R, BK, Sweep, R, R, R, BK, Sweep
Babality — D, F, F, B, HP
Friendship — LP, R, R, LP

Sub-Zero

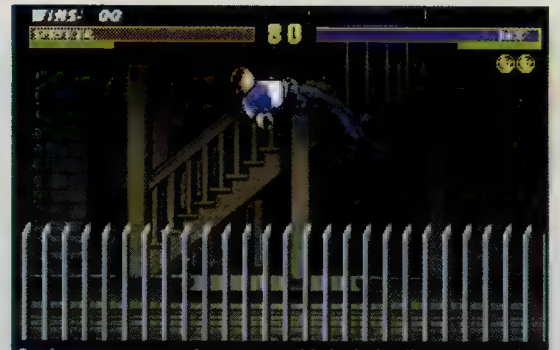
Fatality — B, B, D, B, R, D, F, B, HK
Animality — F, U, U, U, U, U
Babality — D, B, B, HK
Friendship — LK, LK, R, R

Cyrax

Fatality — R, BK, R
Animality — Hold BK, U, U, D, D
Babality — F, F, B, HP
Friendship — R, R, R, U

Smoke

Fatality — U, U, F, D
Animality — U, F, F, BK
Babality — D, D, B, B, HK
Friendship — R, R, R, HK



Stryker prepares to take a nap on this bed of nails courtesy of his good buddy, Jax.

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Star Rangers

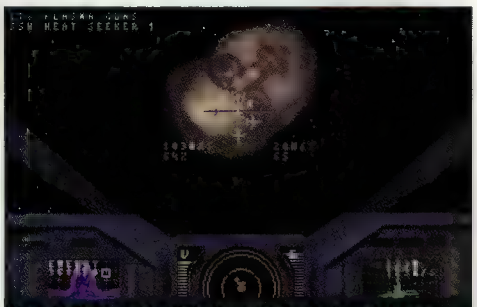
Create intergalactic mayhem with cheats that are out of this world!

The folks at Interactive Magic cheerfully admit they borrowed a page from the classic Atari 2600 game *Star Raiders* when they designed their sci-fi simulation *Star Rangers* — but their game is a far cry from the simple arcade shoot-'em-up of years gone by. Each mission takes careful planning and a steady hand to see you through wave after wave of enemy fighters. If you can't seem to get your bearings, or you find yourself stuck on one particularly tough scenario, we've got a few cheats that can get you blasting with the best of them. To activate the cheat codes, simply type them at any point in the game.

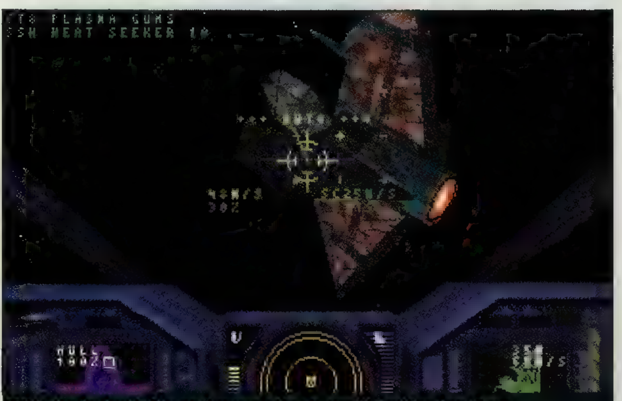
JAVA	— Enable cheats
SHAZAM	— Toggle invincibility
CAMEO	— Toggle autopilot for the Warp Tunnel
VITAMINZ	— Toggle full fuel and ammo
SCOTTY	— Infinite Warp
ISEEU	— View all enemies on the Map
ZOOMERZ	— Time acceleration
BOGONS	— Displays the *Star Rangers* design team
SHIFT+F12	— Switch to low-resolution mode
VOIZIS	— Force mission completion
VOIZIF	— Force mission failure

You can also jump to any mission in the game using these codes:

VOIZI1	— Mission 1
VOIZI2	— Mission 2
VOIZI3	— Mission 3
VOIZI4	— Mission 4
VOIZI5	— Mission 5
VOIZI6	— Mission 6
VOIZI7	— Mission 7
VOIZI8	— Mission 8
VOIZI9	— Mission 9
VOIZI0	— Mission 10
VOIZI!	— Mission 11
VOIZI@	— Mission 12
VOIZI#	— Mission 13
VOIZI$	— Mission 14
VOIZI%	— Mission 15
VOIZI^	— Mission 16
VOIZI&	— Mission 17



If you'd like to add a little flavor to the dark and dreary reaches of space, try using the BOGONS cheat to enable these pictures of the *Star Rangers* design team.



With the invincibility and ammo cheats, you'll be blasting those bad guys with no worries.

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What you loathe, you will worship.
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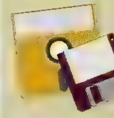

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Product Information Number 121

It's true, we admit it — we can never get enough of your thought-provoking, rib-tickling, and just-plain-weird letters. Keep 'em coming, and give some thought to our latest topic for discussion: What's the oldest PC game you still find yourself playing, and what keeps you coming back to it? In other words, what qualities do you think a computer game needs to have before it qualifies as an enduring classic?

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Wrath of the Gods from Luminaria may be just the ticket if you want to do some exploring in ancient times.

SNES Supporter

Dear PC Gamer,
I would like to congratulate you guys and gals on an excellent magazine. I have bought almost every issue since the beginning of last year, and still refer to them all today.

Anyway, I would like to tell you that you should not put so much faith in the PC roleplaying genre. Not only has it gone spiraling downward, it has been trampled by a little company named SquareSoft. Although I still play the PC, the last two or three months my time and money has been directed to my dust-gathering Super Nintendo. They have done something pretty amazing. They brought me back to RPGs, something I swore I would never touch again. With a little thought, an excellent interface, a good plot, some 32MBs, and a pinch of salt, they made an almost revolutionary *Final Fantasy III*. This brought me to think that if SquareSoft made PC games, specifically RPGs, they would rule supreme. Any how, with this new life for RPGs, I scanned the stores for some good computer RPGs. To be honest, none have yet come up as good as the Super NES RPGs. Please tell me that something better is coming, because with the look of things, I may not need that processor upgrade after all!

Keep up the good mag,
Mark Trella
Chicago, IL

We've found that whether or not you're excited about roleplaying games on the PC depends on what kind of RPG you like, Mark. There's no question that the PC, with its more powerful processor and huge storage capacity, is capable of playing host to much deeper, more sophisticated RPGs than a cartridge-based machine like the Super Nintendo (and you should keep in mind that when a videogame cartridge is hyped as having "32 megs," they're referring to megabits, not megabytes. Since a megabit is a great deal smaller than a megabyte, even the biggest SNES games are considerably smaller than the average PC game). Still, we get a significant number of letters from people who like the simpler, more fast-paced roleplaying they find on videogame machines and wish they could find more of the same for their PCs. Don't give up on your PC yet; as more and more videogame publishers hop on the PC bandwagon, you're bound to see more of what you're looking for.

Ancient Adventures

Dear PC Gamer,
This letter is in response to John deBoer in your Letters column (November 1995 issue), who is looking for a great game located on Earth in antiquity. I recommend *Wrath of the Gods* from Luminaria. It takes place in ancient Greece, with the gamer visiting famous historical sites and running into characters from history and Greek mythology. The graphics and video sequences are excellent, the challenges fun (e.g. navigating the *Argo* through the crashing rocks), and the dialogue witty (Hercules advising us to eat our "veggies"). Although knowledge of ancient Greece makes the game move faster, the hints from the Oracle provide a banquet of information, making the game also a terrific learning adventure.

Sincerely,
Barbara Wood
Riverside, CA

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Dear PC Gamer,
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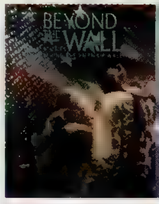

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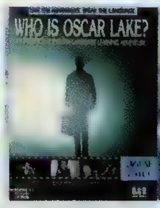

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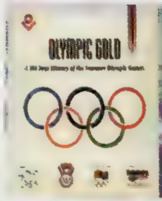

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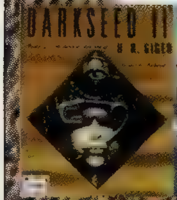

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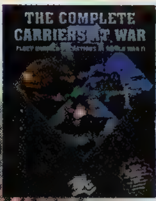

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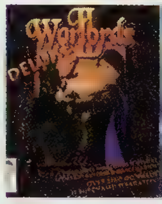

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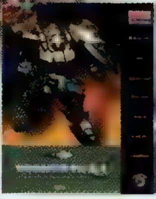

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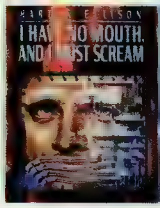

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Product Information Number 174

Will the PC gamer finally be able to try before they buy, like videogamers have done for so long? Or will this trend pass like so many others?

"Natsirt the Great"
via AOL

Actually, the software-rental trend came and went a few years ago — it didn't survive because so many games came on just a few floppy disks, making them far too easy a target for piracy. But since almost all of today's games come on one or more CD-ROMs containing hundreds of megabytes of data — and since recordable CD drives still cost an arm and a leg — piracy's not likely to be a big factor. That's why PC software rentals are on their way back. As you can tell from our monthly CD, we're big believers in the try-before-you-buy principle, so we think it's a healthy trend.

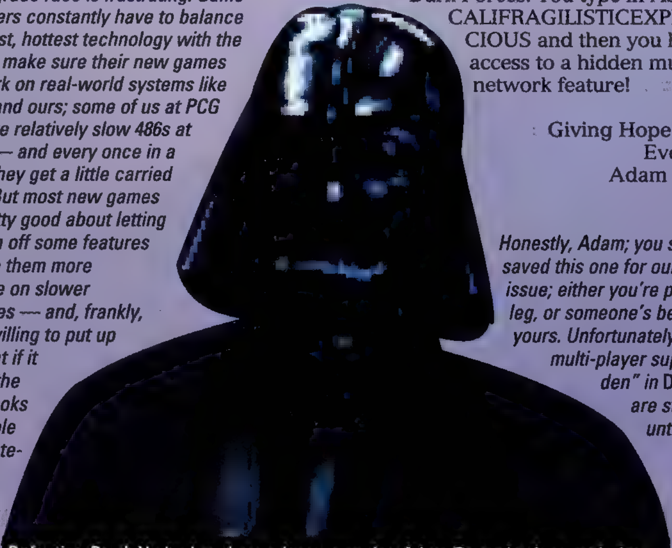
Upgrade Blues

Dear PC Gamer,

I am becoming very frustrated with the outrageous system specs that are demanded from the games on the market. A computer I bought the Christmas of 1994 is almost out of date. I didn't think I'd need to upgrade as much as I did just to be able to play the latest games. Games can be made without requiring the system specs of a NASA computer. *The 7th Guest* and *X-Wing* CD are prime examples. When *The 7th Guest* came out, they had to spend a lot of time to figure out a way to get the system specs down, and look at the end result. It seems as if companies are getting lazy and unrealistic.

Sincerely,
Pete Gerharz
Lombard, IL

The upgrade race is frustrating. Game publishers constantly have to balance the latest, hottest technology with the need to make sure their new games will work on real-world systems like yours (and ours; some of us at PCG still have relatively slow 486s at home) — and every once in a while, they get a little carried away. But most new games are pretty good about letting you turn off some features to make them more playable on slower machines — and, frankly, we're willing to put up with that if it means the game looks incredible on a state-of-the-art system.



Defeating Darth Vader hasn't ever been easy, but Adam Brown's cheat code for *Dark Forces* will steer you in the wrong direction.

Still Looking

Dear PC Gamer,

I totally agree with James Gibson in his letter entitled "Looking for Clues," published in your November issue. Game companies just lose my business when they make even the lowest levels of their games ridiculously difficult. I just stop playing, and will not rush into buying their games again.

I personally get dissatisfied with the silly little quirks that some game producers just *expect* you to work out. I consider myself intelligent and in possession of an abundance of common sense — I want to be able to follow a game that unfolds *logically*, and not just on the whim of the game designer. So come on, game companies: make the games more logical, and include a hint section! Sierra has done so with *Phantasmagoria*, so let's hope others follow suit.

Sincerely,
Ken Allan
Vancouver, Canada

Funny you should use Phantasmagoria *as an example, Ken; a lot of die-hard adventure fans found that one of the game's few flaws is that it's too easy. But you're right — far too many graphic adventures have puzzles that just don't follow any kind of logic. You've already hit on the solution to the problem, though: you vote with your dollars, making sure the well-designed games are rewarded, and the illogical ones wind up in the bargain bin.*

Multi-Player Forces?

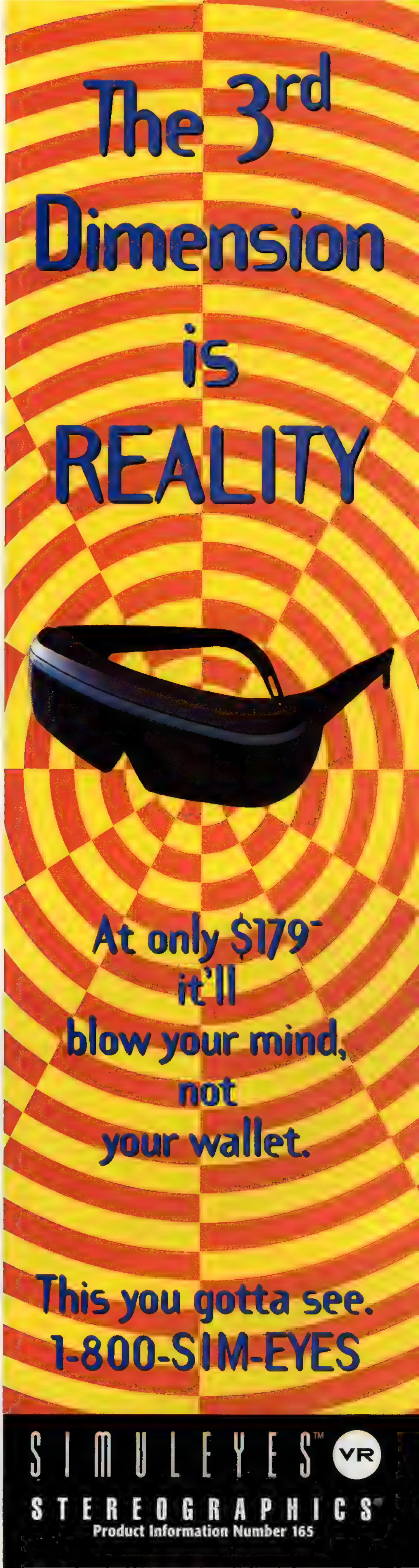
Dear PCG,

I recently ran across a great cheat for Dark Forces. You type in ASUPERCALIFRAGILISTICEXPIALIDOCIOUS and then you have access to a hidden multi-player network feature!

Giving Hope to Rebels
Everywhere,
Adam K. Brown
via AOL

Honestly, Adam; you should've saved this one for our April 1st issue; either you're pulling our leg, or someone's been pulling yours. Unfortunately, rumors of multi-player support "hidden" in Dark Forces *are strictly untrue.*

PCG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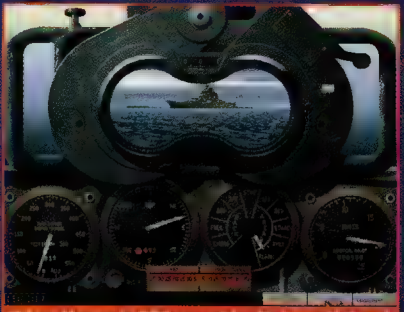

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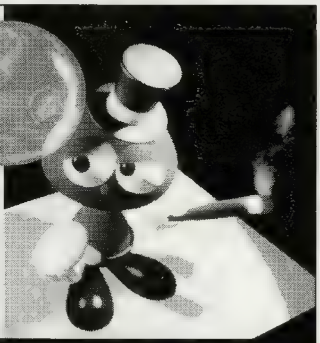

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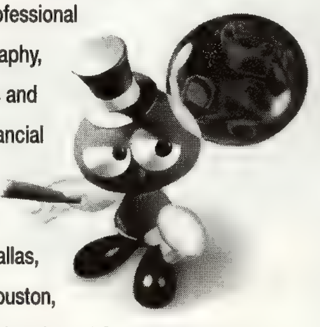

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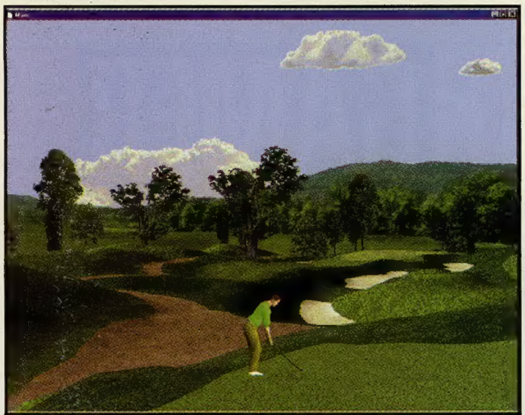
Award

The Second Annual PC GAMER Awards

We see all the games, good and bad, and when the year has hit us with everything it has to offer, we sit down to pick the best ones. After some spirited arguments and one or two good-natured fist-fights, we settle on the cream of the crop in every gaming genre. Be here for the laughter, the tears, and the pageantry of the *PC Gamer* Awards.

Fore!

You smack a little ball with a stick, walk until you catch up with it, then smack it again. It sounds so crazy, it must be a sport. So why are golf sims among the top-selling games for the PC? We'll answer that question and look at the hottest new golf games next month.



Better book some time on the driving range; next month, we'll have some sensational news for PC golfing fans.

Reviews

Warcraft II

Lion

EF2000

Wing Commander IV

WipeOut

FPS: Football Pro '96

Destruction Derby

...and more!

Warcraft II

Destruction Derby

Plus ...

More news, previews, hints, tips, and cheat codes than you can shake a joystick at.

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February 1996

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BPA INTERNATIONAL

The battle in the desert raged on, as Stearns dropped the terrorist guards, one by one.

Meanwhile, back at Company Headquarters, in a secret sublevel accessible only with a special cheat code, Colonel Gaskins and the mysterious agent known only as "the Coconut Monkey" observed the epic struggle transmitted through Stearns' handy wristlink.

Pro jected onto a giant wall screen, Stearns' every move was analyzed and dissected by the Company computers, preserved for prosperity and future training videos.

"Well, Gaskins," said the Monkey, as the fourth guard collapsed under Stearns' ruthless onslaught. "Do you think we'll be able to find the plans to the Jihad's new weapons satellite?".

"Well," said the Colonel, "if he doesn't, we'll have one heckuva time fending off those aliens from Zargon-Nine. "

"Non-sequitur," said the Monkey.

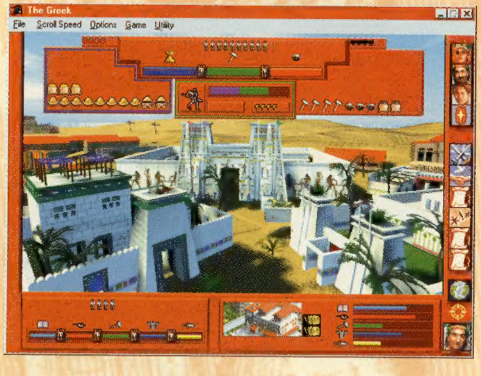
"Garnash. Hey look, he's going to use the Spoon. This should be good."

Both spymasters turned their eyes to the viewscreen...

TO BE CONTINUED...

They Came.

They Saw.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Scroll Speed
Options
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They Kicked Some Butt.

The Egyptian
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THE HIVE™
TRIMARK INTERACTIVE
Designed for Microsoft Windows 95
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rainbow america

"HOT GAME!"

- US News and World Report

"THE GRAPHICS ARE AMAZING... FANS WILL BE IN JOY STICK HEAVEN."

- Computer Gaming World

"THE HIVE IS WHAT REBEL ASSAULT SHOULD HAVE BEEN... AGGRESSIVELY ORIGINAL... GROUND BREAKING..."

- Strategy Plus

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